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'Her beautiful black hair fell upon her shoulders.'

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BY

WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF

'ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN' 'DOROTHY FORSTER'
'CHILDREN OF GIBEON' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

WITH A PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR BY JOHN PETTIE, R.A.
AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. FORESTIER

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THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALAS! POOR BESS!

ALAS! poor Bess!

You have heard how she spent the first day, and with what a heavy heart she went to bed. In the morning she plucked up heart a little. As for what the Lieutenant said to her father, what matter if he did say that she was already married? It was his joke—Jack would ever have his joke. He had been busy all day. The evening he must needs spend with the Admiral, his patron and benefactor. But he would not—he could not—fail to see her the

second day. So again she dressed in her best, and repaired early to her place in the Apothecary's parlour, where she took her seat and waited. But she laughed no longer, nor did she prattle. Jack came not; he was in London, taking a lodging in Ryder Street, and buying brave things in which to wait upon his Lordship. And the third day she went again —but now with white cheeks and heavy eyes, and she rocked herself to and fro, replying nothing, whatever Mr. Brinjes might say to her.

In the afternoon of that day I went in search of her, being anxious, and dreading mischief.

'I know not,' said Mr. Westmoreland, getting off the stool, 'I know not, indeed, Mr. Luke, what hath happened to the girl, nor where she is, unless she is in Mr. Brinjes' parlour, where most of her days are spent. These three days she hath forgotten to give me any meals, and hath left me alone all day; while in the evening, when I come home, she either sits mum or she goes upstairs. Nothing disturbs the mind in the midst of logarithms

more than a doubt whether there will be any dinner to eat or any supper. At this time of the year I commonly look for soft cheese and a cucumber. But now I have to get what I can. I know not what ails her. If I did know I question whether I could find any remedy, seeing that she is so headstrong. Sometimes I doubt whether there is some love trouble on her mind. Yet I know not with whom. It cannot be with Aaron Fletcher, because she has refused the young man several times. Besides, his affairs are said to be well-nigh desperate, his boat being lost, his yard burned down, his boat-building business thrown away; yet, if it is not Aaron, who can it be? Because, Sir, though my daughter hath her faults, and those many, being as to temper equalled only by her mother, now in Abraham's bosom, or—or—perhaps elsewhere,' he added, being a truthful man; 'yet, she is not one who courts the company of men, nor listens willingly to the voice of love.'

Mr. Brinjes, though it was in the afternoon, was talking with his assistant in his shop.

'You will find her,' he said, 'within. I have left her for five minutes, for it teases me to see her thus despairing. The worst has yet to come, because she is not a girl to sit down peaceably under this contempt. Well, for that matter, every sailor is inconstant, if you please; and the women know it, and expect it. But Bess is no common Poll o' the Point, who looks for nothing else than to be forgotten. Nor did she first seek him out. Yet I knew what would happen, because such love as his was too hot to last—else would it burn him up. There was a Bristol man in Captain Roberts' company was consumed for love of a young Coromantyn girl, wasting away and crying out that he was on fire, yet never happy unless she was at his side. It is a natural witchery which a few women possess, by which they make men love them, and draw the very soul out of the man they love. Bess hath this power: she can make any man love her, and when she loves a man she can bewitch him so that he shall never be happy but at her feet. Why, Jack hath forgotten her. Yet it is most true

that, if he but come back to her for a single day, he would fall at her feet again.'

'Nay,' I said, 'he is already in love with another woman.'

'Miss Castilla, the Admiral's daughter. It is a passing fancy, because she is a pretty creature, small and slender. But to compare her with Bess!—to think that a man can love her as he can love Bess! There, you know nothing of love. Go in there, and I will follow. I have known,' he continued, being garrulous, as old men often are, 'I have known such cases as this of Bess—the jealous woman who hath been forgotten—ay, I have known them by the hundred. Sometimes they take it with a sudden rage; sometimes they cry out for a knife, and would kill their faithless lover first and themselves next; sometimes they throw themselves into the water; sometimes they murder the other woman; sometimes they laugh, and lay by for a chance of revenge. One woman I knew who concealed her wrath for twenty years, but revenged herself in the end. Sometimes they make up their minds

that it matters little. This case is peculiar; for the patient is not in a rage—as yet; nor has she called for a knife—as yet; nor has she promised to hang herself—as yet; but she sits and waits; and all the time the humours are mounting to the brain; so that we are only at the beginning of the disorder, and my forecast as to this disease is, my lad, that we shall have trouble. What? Is a fine high-spirited girl to be shoved aside into the gutter without a word said, or any cause pretended? Not so, Sir; not so. There will be trouble.'

I passed into the parlour with trepidation. Bess lifted her head. Her face was pale and haggard; wildness was in her eyes.

'Where is he?' she cried. 'You call yourself my friend, yet you come without him. Where is he?'

'I do not know, Bess, where he is, unless that he is somewhere in London.'

'I believe it is you who have kept him from me—yet you call yourself my friend. You have set him against me. Though what you have found to say I know not. I have

not so much as looked at another man since he went away, and I have kept his secret for him, so that no one suspects. How dare you put yourself between my sweetheart and me?'

'Indeed, Bess,' I told her, 'I have said nothing against you. I have not put myself between Jack and you. I have said nothing.'

Then she began to rail at me for my silence. Why had I not spoken of her? Why had I not reminded him of his faith and promised constancy? 'And where is he,' she repeated, 'that he does not come to me? Is he afraid of me? Doth he try to hide himself out of my way?'

I told her that he was in lodgings in town, and that his time was taken up with his affairs. And then, because she began to upbraid me again, I thought it was better to tell her the truth, and, therefore, said plainly that the Lieutenant loved her no longer; that he had, indeed, given me to understand, without the possibility of a mistake, that the past was clean forgotten, and gone out of his mind.

I was sorry—truly, I was sorry—for the

poor creature. For every word I said was nothing less than a dagger into her heart. A man must have been as hard-hearted as a Romish inquisitor not to have felt sorry for her. She heard me with parted lips and panting breath. Is there, I wonder, a more dreadful task than to be the messenger to tell a fond woman that the man she loves now loathes her?

Seeing that she received my information with no more outward symptom of wrath, I began to point out, to the best of my ability, that Lieutenant Easterbrook, when he fell in love with her, was still less than twenty years of age, who had been for six years separated from his countrywomen, and had forgotten what an Englishwoman should be; that he might have fallen in love with one of his own rank, but for his long wanderings among savages, and his imprisonment with common sailors, which had left him rough and rude in manners; that things were now quite changed, because he was not only an officer of some rank, but was now a gallant gentleman, keeping company of the best, and might, if he

desired, marry an heiress; that his long silence ought to have prepared her for the change in his disposition; and that, seeing nobody except Mr. Brinjes and myself knew of what had happened, a wise and prudent girl would show her pride, and take her revenge by showing that she cared nothing for his neglect. In fact, I said on this occasion all that was proper to be said. Mr. Brinjes sat silent in his chair, but kept his eye upon Bess, as if expecting that something would happen.

Then, long before I had finished all I had to say, Bess suddenly sprang to her feet with a cry, and burst forth into wild and ungoverned wrath. I have seen fishwives fighting at Billingsgate, a ring of men and women round them, and a truly dreadful thing it is to see women stripped for battle and using their fists like men; never before, or since, have I seen a young and beautiful girl thus give way to passion uncontrolled. At first she could find no words to express her wrath; she clutched at her heart; she tore down her hair; she gasped for breath; she swung her arms abroad; she

swayed her body backward and forward. I looked to see Mr. Brinjes go seek his lancet, and give her relief by breathing a vein. But he did not. He sat looking on coldly and anxiously, as if he was watching the progress of a fever. Presently she found words.

I will not write down what she said, because, as regards myself and Mr. Brinjes, her reproaches were wholly undeserved, and, indeed, we had been throughout her best friends. Besides, the ravings of a *femina furens*, or woman mad with jealousy and disappointed love, ought not to be set down, any more than those of a man in delirium. When she came to speak of her faithless lover she choked, and presently stopped and was silent. But, poor soul! all the while she looked from one to the other of us as if to find hope in our faces, but saw none. Finally, she shrieked aloud, as if she could no longer bear this agony, and hurled herself headlong upon the floor, and so lay, her head upon her hands, her whole body convulsed.

'Let be, let be,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'after this she will be better. The storm was

bound to burst. Better that it should rage in this room than that she should go to a certain house we know of'—he jerked his finger in the direction of the Admiral's. 'Say nothing to her; if you speak you will make her worse. Presently she will come round. What? Nature can go no farther, unless she would wear herself to pieces. And they never go so far as that, whatever their wrath, because the pain of the body becomes intolerable.'

He spoke as if she could not hear or was insensible, which I take to have been the case, for in five minutes or so she sat up, taking no notice of what had been said, and became partly rational, and said calmly, sitting on the floor, that she should go away and kill Jack first, and herself afterwards; and she declared that, if he dared to address any other woman, she would tear her limb from limb. So that I trembled for Castilla. But Mr. Brinjes looked on without surprise or terror, murmuring, 'Let be, let be; it will do her good. And I have seen them worse.'

And, indeed, presently she arose from the

ground and tied up her beautiful hair, which had fallen about her shoulders, and smoothed her disordered frock, and sat down again in the window-seat, clasping her knees with her hands, moaning and weeping, and rocking herself to and fro. And at this symptom of progress or development of the 'case,' the Apothecary nodded and winked at me, as much as to say that the disease was taking a favourable turn.

He knew the symptoms, this learned physician, who had studied woman's nature where it is the most ungovernable and the most exposed to observation, among the negresses, and, I suppose, applied to more civilised women the rules he had learned among these artless pagans. For, in fact, she speedily ceased either to weep or to moan, but sat upright, drew a long breath, and spoke quite gently and prettily, like a little child who has been naughty, and now promises to be good again.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'that I have given so much trouble—I will never do it again.

Mr. Brinjes, you have not had your nap, nor your afternoon punch, through my fault. I will mix you a glass, and then you shall go to sleep.' She did so, and arranged his pillows for him, and in a few minutes afterwards the old man was sound asleep. Then Bess turned to me. 'Forgive me, Luke,' she said, giving me her hand; 'you are my best friend—except this poor old man, you are my only friend. You have never been weary of teaching me how a gentlewoman should behave, so that I should be worthy of a gentleman: and now it has ended in this. He has forgotten me, who have never forgotten him—no, not for a moment, since the day when first he told me—oh! the happy day! He came into the room where I was sitting before the fire and took me in his arms—oh! in his arms! Could I ever forget him? No—no; not for a moment.'

'My poor Bess!' I said. 'What can I say—what do—for you in this dreadful trouble?'

The tears stood in her eyes, but she wept no longer.

'I know,' she said, after a while, 'what I

will do. Here is his letter to me.' She drew it from her bosom. It went to my heart to see the prettily-worked silken bag she had made for it with her own hands. 'First, you shall take it to him, Luke, and give it to him yourself. Will you do so much for me? It is not a great thing to ask you, is it? Give it to him and tell him that he must read it, and then bring it back to me. And Luke, dear Luke, you have always been kind to me, always my friend, though you know nothing about love, do you? Else you would understand that a woman would rather die than lose her lover. Give him the letter. When he reads it, he will remember, and then——then, Luke!—— You will tell him—oh! tell him'—she laid her hands upon my arm, and gazed upon me with imploring eyes—'tell him, dear friend, that I am more beautiful than ever—Mr. Brinjes says I am—and that I have tried to teach myself the ways of a gentlewoman, for his sake; and that I can read and write, a little, so that he shall not be ashamed of me; and that I associate no more with the other girls, and have

been true to him ever since he went away. Tell him all, Luke, and everything else that you can think of that is kind and friendly, and that will make him want to see me again. Oh, if he were here in this room with me for one hour he would love me again!'

'I will take the letter, Bess,' I told her, moved to tears; 'and I will give it to him myself, and tell him all that you wish; and more—more, my poor Bess!'

'When will you give it to him?'

'To-morrow. Will that do?'

So with that promise she appeared to be more contented, and went away, though with hanging head—the poor, fond, loving girl!

'You may give the Lieutenant that letter,' said the Apothecary, 'and you may tell him what you please. But, if I know Jack Easterbrook, you might as well try to knock him down with a feather. As for making her his wife, it is out of the question; and to become his mistress without being his wife, Bess would not consent; nor, I think, would Jack ask her. Because, d'ye see, he no longer cares a rope's

yarn about her. Yet, if he would come here for a single hour—Bess knows her power—trust a woman who has that power. But I think he will not come. And so there will be trouble—I know not yet of what kind—there will be trouble.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN AMBASSADOR OF LOVE.

I READILY accepted the mission ; but, like many other ambassadors, I hesitated when the time came to discharge my trust. For Jack was like those Oriental Bashaws who cut off the heads of messengers that bring uncomfortable tidings. First, I thought it would be best to give the letter to him at Deptford, so that, if he was moved by pity, or by love, he might go straight to the poor girl and offer her consolation. But I had promised to give it the very next day. Therefore, I plucked up courage, and made my way to his lodgings, the letter in my pocket, knowing full well that he would take my interference ill, being too masterful to brook counsel, advice, or admonition from anyone, unless it came as an order from a superior officer.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when I reached his lodging in Ryder Street. He was sitting wrapped in a sheet, while the barber was finishing his hair with the powder puff. On the table stood his morning chocolate and cream.

'Ho!' he cried. 'Here is the Prince of Painters. Art come to paint me a portrait, Luke?' (N.B.—I did paint his portrait, and have it still, a speaking likeness, and a better piece of work I never did.) 'Wait a moment, my hearty, till this lubber hath finished the top dressing.'

Presently the man finished, and removed the sheet, showing beneath it a full-dress Lieutenant's uniform—to my mind the blue of the Navy is far more becoming to a handsome man than the scarlet of the Army. Just as he rose from the barber's hands, the man still standing before him, the implements of the trade in his hand and I beside him—I heard a rustling of petticoats outside, and the door was opened by a lady. She was wrapped from head to foot in a hood, and wore a domino.

'Madam!' said Jack, bowing low.

The lady removed her domino, and laughed, and threw off her hood. Truly a most beautiful creature she was, and most richly dressed. 'Twas the merriest, most roguish face that one ever saw, with dancing eyes and laughing lips. I ought to have known the face, because I had seen it several times; but I did not, because an actress dressed for a Queen or a Sultana seems to change her face as well as her frock. She was, indeed, an actress—very well known to the world, as you would acknowledge did I write down her name, which I shall not do, for many reasons.

'I have found my hero, then,' said the lady, 'in his own—cabin—or is it on his own quarter-deck? Are the decks cleared for action? Are you ready, Sir, to engage the enemy?'

'Alas! Madam,' said Jack, 'I haul down my colours, and give up my sword.'

He fell upon one knee and kissed the hand which the lady graciously extended to him. Now, observe that she took no kind of notice of

the barber or of myself, whom she mistook, doubtless, for an assistant or some other kind of tradesman. I mean that in what followed my presence was not the slightest restraint upon her.

'I am a rash creature,' she said, 'to imperil my reputation by visiting a Lieutenant of the King's Navy alone in the morning. Suppose I had been observed.'

'Madam'—Jack made her so fine a bow that I could not help thinking of the Jack who had come home in rags three years before—'could I desire a more delightful task than the defence of your reputation?'.

'I thank you, Lieutenant. But I have a readier defence in my hood and domino. A woman's reputation is quite safe, I assure you, so long as she is not seen. It is in this respect unlike so many gentlemen's honour, which is only safe so long as they are seen. I came not, however, for compliments. First of all, I came to say that I shall be alone this afternoon. You can visit me, if you please. Next, my Lord is coming to supper with me after the

theatre. He will presently call here himself, or send a letter, and will invite you to come with him. To oblige me, Lieutenant, you will come.'

'Madam,' said Jack, with a smiling face, 'you were born, sure, to make me the happiest of men.'

'The happiest of men!' she repeated, merrily laughing. 'Oh! what creatures we women would esteem ourselves, since, with such little trouble, we can make men happy! And how miserable are we that it takes so much more to make us happy! Heigho! You are made happy with a smile, or a kind word, or a hand to kiss, or permission to take supper with us—while we. . . . Oh! we know how little these things are worth. Therefore. . . . No, Sir, you have kissed my hand already.' At this point the barber, who had now gathered up his tools, retired from the room. I retreated to the window, and gazed upon the street, as if I was anxious not to listen. She, however, took no notice of my presence. 'Come this afternoon, then, and this evening, after you have seen me

from the front, you can join my Lord. But that is not all I had to say, oh, happiest of men!' She laughed again. 'This will make you indeed a happy man, if the roar of the cannons and the groans of wounded men are sweeter than the smiles of women.'

'Indeed, Madam, I cannot understand——'

'What I have now to tell will, I dare say, make a round dozen of women miserable, for my hero is a handsome hero. But not me, Sir. Oh, pray do not think that! An actress, everybody knows, hath no heart. She is but a toy, to be laughed at and played with, until the men find another which is newer, and hath less of the gilt rubbed off. Yet I shall be sorry, Jack—do your friends call you Jack?—though it is but the day before yesterday that I made your acquaintance, Sir.'

'Still, Madam,' he persisted, 'I know not——'

'This is a very fine coat, Jack,' she went on, laying her hand, covered with a white glove, upon his sleeve. 'I love the colour. 'Tis a new coat, too, so that 'twill be a pity to buy

another. Perhaps, however, this may be made to do, and methinks it will be greatly improved if we put a little lace upon the lapels and cuffs, and change the button for one with a crown instead of an anchor.'

'Madam!' He started, and changed countenance, because these additions mark the rank of Captain. 'Madam! Is it possible?'

'Why, Jack, when a handsome lad does a woman so great a service, and for all his reward wants nothing but to be sent away from her sight, I doubt whether she is not a fool for her pains if she help him—yet——' here she sighed. 'His Majesty's frigate "Calypso," the "Sapphire's" prize, is to be refitted without delay and commissioned. Go, take possession of your own quarter-deck, Captain Easterbrook. Perhaps the next lady whose jewels you save from robbers may make you an Admiral.' With this she curtseyed, so as to sweep the ground, as they are wont to do upon the stage.

'Oh! Madam,' he cried, 'how can I show my gratitude?'

'You will not set sail for a week or two

yet, I suppose. Come to see me as often as you please. To my brave defender I am always at home.'

She held out her hand, but Jack did not, as I expected, stoop to kiss it. On the contrary, he disregarded it altogether, and caught her in his arms, kissing her lips and cheeks. I looked to see her resent this familiarity with the greatest show of displeasure, for here was no simple girl of the lower sort, like poor Bess, but a very grand lady indeed, who, for all she was an actress, had all the noblemen of London at her feet. But, to my astonishment, she only laughed, and gently pushed him from her.

'Jack,' she said, 'thou hast truly a conquering way. Let me go, Sir!'

She laughed again, in her merry, saucy way; put on her domino, pulled the hood over her head, and suffered Jack to conduct her to her chair, which waited without.

'Hang it, Luke!' cried Jack, when he came back. 'I forgot that thou wast here; and I dare swear Madam never saw thee. Must I never kiss a pretty woman but this

virtuous fellow must still be looking on, with open mouth?'

'Shall I tell Castilla, Jack?'—thinking of what might have happened had Bess been there.

'Why, in a kiss there is no harm, surely; therefore, there is no need to tell Castilla. If this news be true—and it must be true—Luke, thou art a Puritan. As for a simple kiss which is snatched, they like it, man. Every woman, except Castilla, who is a miracle of goodness, likes such kisses.'

'Who is the lady, Jack?'

'Why, she is a great actress; and the other night, by a lucky chance—I was going home at midnight—I heard a woman's scream and a trampling of feet. 'Twas but an attack upon a lady's chair by footpads, whom it was nothing to drive off without more trouble than to draw and to slash one of them across the face. Then I saw her safe to her lodgings. 'Tis a grateful creature.'

'She seems grateful,' I said. 'Do actresses often appoint commanders to His Majesty's ships?'

'No, Luke; no, my lad, they do not. These appointments are given according to merit, seniority, courage, seamanship, and patriotism. That is very well understood, and it is the reason why everybody is so contented who wears the King's uniform. But suppose that one of my Lords the Commissioners should take a particular interest in a certain lady, and suppose this lady should have eyes to see all these virtues combined in one man; and suppose she should be able further so to persuade his Lordship, who, we will again suppose, knows already something of this man. Confess, then, that it would be a lucky thing for this man were this lady to single him out for the favour of recommendation.'

'Truly, it would be lucky for him.'

'Captain of the "Calypso,"' he exclaimed. 'Why, have I done badly to command a frigate at twenty-four? What care I who appoints me so that I get my chance? Will the world know? Have I done anything dishonourable? My Lord hath already promised me promotion: I looked to be First Lieutenant perhaps—and

now. . . . Luke, my lad, I am so happy that I could e'en go back to Deptford and fight Aaron Fletcher again, as I did three years ago at Horn Fair.'

'Yes, Jack; I could wish in my heart that you would fight him again, if it were about the same woman.'

He changed countenance, but quickly recovered.

'Come lad,' he said, 'ease thy mind, which is full of something. Let me hear it.'

'Put out of your mind,' I said, 'Castilla and this actress and all women, except one. I have been asked by one whom you should remember to bring to you a certain letter, and to beg, first, that you will read it, and next, that you will, with your own hand, restore it to the owner.'

With this I took the letter from my pocket and gave it to him in its silk bag.

'Why,' he said, breaking into a laugh, as if the matter was not serious at all, 'this is my own letter. I wrote it, I remember, one afternoon, off Cape Finisterre—I remember the day

very well. Did the girl—Bess Westmoreland was her name—give it to thee, Luke? Oh! I remember—I was in love with her. A devilish fine girl she was, with eyes like sloes.'

He read the letter through. 'To think that I wrote that letter, and that she believed it! "Most beautiful woman in the world." . . . Fondest lover!" Oho! I wonder how many such letters are written aboard-ship the first week after sailing? As for this—why, Luke, you had better give it back to the girl, if she wishes to keep it. Tell her to show it to her friends as the work of a fool. Perhaps her new lover or her husband might like to have the letter. But, indeed, I think she had better burn the thing, in case of accidents. Husbands do not like, generally, to read such letters.'

'She has had no other lovers, Jack, on your account.'

'Pretty fool! Bid her waste good time no longer.'

'She will suffer no man to speak to her, saying that she belongs to you alone, and thinking you would come home to marry her.'

'I suppose,' said Jack, his face darkening, 'that the meddlesome old Apothecary is at the bottom of this foolishness?'

'And myself, too. Why, Jack, you solemnly placed her in my charge. You begged me to take care of her. You tattooed her name upon your arm. Look at your arm. What could we think? She has learned things for your sake, Jack—such as gentle manners, and to restrain her tongue, and to govern herself—generally, that is,' because I remembered the scene of yesterday. 'You would not know her again.'

'Well, Luke, she has therefore been so far kept out of mischief, which is good for every girl. And this is a wicked world, and seaports are full of traps for girls. Tell her, however, that now she had better lose no time in looking for a husband in her own station. The fellow Aaron Fletcher would, perhaps, make a good husband, provided he kept decently sober.'

'Do not blame Mr. Brinjes. He hath warned her continually that sailors go away

and break their promises. But will you see her, Jack?'

'No. What the devil would be the use of my seeing her?'

I told him how she had put on her best, and gone to wait for him at the Apothecary's, and there waited for three long days. But he was not softened a whit.

'It is their foolish way,' he said. 'We say fond things and promise whatever will please them, and they believe it all. Why they believe the nonsense, the Lord knows. As for the men who say it, and make the promises, they believe it too, I dare say, at the time. 'Tis pretty, too, to see them purr and coo whatever extravagances you tell them. I remember now'—but here he stopped short in his recollections.

'Jack,' I said, 'will you pull up your sleeve, and show me your arm?'

He laughed, and obeyed. It was his left arm, and, as we know, it was tattooed all over with the once-loved name of Bess.

''Tis like the arm of any fo'k'sle tar,' he said. 'What was I, in these days, better? Yet,

lad, the name hath no longer any meaning to my eyes.'

'Meaning or not,' I insisted, 'will you give her the letter with your own hand? Jack, only let her tell you what is in her mind. That is a small thing to do.'

'It would be more cruel than to refuse to see her at all. Trust me, if this girl gives trouble I shall know how to deal with her. If you have any regard for her, bid her spoil her market no longer, and put maggots out of her head. She would marry me, would she? Kind soul, I thank her for it with all my heart. She would marry me, would she? I will tell thee a thing, my lad, which thou wilt never find out for thyself with all thy paint-brushes—there is no woman in the world more hateful to a man than a woman whom he hath once loved and now loves no longer. It is like coming back to a half-finished banquet when the dishes are cold and the wine is stale. Yet the foolish women believe that once in love, always in love. Better she should learn the truth at once, and so an end.'

He gave me back the letter, and would say no more upon the subject. But he said I must make a picture of him before he went away, and he would be painted in the new uniform, which he would order immediately; and I must go instantly and tell Castilla of his good fortune. Thus was I made a go-between, first to one and then to the other.

'And now, Luke, my fortune is made, if I am only moderately lucky. He who is Captain at twenty-four may well be Rear-Admiral at thirty, and command a fleet at thirty-five; at forty he is certainly a Knight, and perhaps a Viscount; and at seventy he lies in Westminster Abbey. What could I hope for better,' he asked, glowing with the joy and elation of his appointment, 'than to command a frigate, easy to handle, swift to sail? Why, it will be the "Tartar" over again in the Captain's cabin instead of the ward-room. That was warm work; but I hope to show warmer work still. God knows, Luke,' he said, earnestly, 'I say it not in boastfulness, I can handle a ship as well as the best man afloat,

and I can take her into action, I promise you, as bravely.'

So he talked; thinking no more at the time of the actress, or of Castilla, or of Bess, for the thought of any ship was enough to turn his mind from a woman, though he so easily fell in love with a pretty girl. And while he was thus talking of his promotion, and the things he hoped to do with his vessel, there drove to the house a chariot, with footmen, and gold panels, very splendid, and two gentlemen got down. They came to visit Jack. One of them was a man no longer young, yet erect and tall, with aquiline nose and proud eyes. He wore a satin coat, with a sash, and a star blazing with diamonds. The other was in the uniform of the Army.

Jack sprang to his feet, and bowed to the ground. 'My Lord,' he said, 'this is an extraordinary honour. Indeed, I could never have expected it.'

'I have come, young gentleman,' said his Lordship, speaking slowly and with the dignity

which became his rank, 'to tender you my thanks for the service which you performed the night before last to a certain lady.'

'My services, my Lord, were trifling, though, fortunately, opportune.'

'Had it not been for your assistance the lady would have lost the jewels which she had worn at the theatre. What other loss or insult she escaped, I know not. I learn that, at her request, you have already paid a visit upon her.'

'At her request, my Lord, I had that honour yesterday afternoon.'

'Believe me, Sir, that in return for such a service there is nothing that I can refuse you.' Jack bowed again very low. 'And since nothing will please you so much as to go back as quickly as possible to the fighting——'

'Nothing so much, my Lord.'

'Then you must go. Your name, I find, is already favourably known. I have therefore the pleasure of promoting for the sake of merit alone, which is not always possible for a Commissioner. You are promoted, Sir, to the

command of the "Calypso," the "Sapphire's" prize.'

'My Lord,' said Jack, again bowing low, 'I have no words, indeed, to express my gratitude for this great, this unexpected, and undeserved favour.' Looking on from the corner of the room, beside the window, I confess I could not help thinking that it would be best for Madam to say nothing about that salute upon her lips.

'Then,' said his Lordship, 'no more need be said.' He rose, and added, smiling, 'Since you will have to go back in a few days to salt junk and pea-soup, Captain, make the most of your time ashore. There will be a supper after the play this evening. I will, if you please to honour me with your company, carry you thither in my coach.'

'I am honoured tó be one of your Lordship's guests,' said Jack.

'A rolling deck, a wet cabin, the smell of tar everywhere, great sea-boots, the waves flying over the ship, the enemy pitching cannon-balls on board—this is what you like,

Captain Easterbrook. Well, Sir, you will have plenty of it, for there will be a long war, if all I hear is true. I shall see you, then, this evening. Come, Colonel.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE APOTHECARY DID HIS BEST.

'TELL her plainly,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'what he said, and how he looked while he said it. Spare her in nothing; so will she the more quickly come to a right mind. What? Didst ever see a surgeon take off a man's leg? Doth he chop here a cantle, and there a snippet, for fear of causing pain? Not he! He ties his bandages and takes his saw, and in five minutes off goes leg; and, though the man may bellow, yet his life is saved.'

There was little hope in her face when I went in to her; the trouble of it made my heart bleed. To think that a woman should still so much love a man who had thrown her away with as little thought as one throws away the

rind of an apple. . . . I thought she would have hated him. But no; at a word, she would have arisen to follow and obey him like a slave.

'Bess,' I said, 'be brave.'

'Where is he?'

'He is in London, at his lodgings.'

'Did you give him the letter?'

'I did. He sent it back to you. Here it is. Courage, Bess. No man is worth so much crying over. It is as I told you before. He loves you no longer. When he thinks of the past, he wonders at himself. When he remembers how much he was once in love, he laughs.'

'Doth he laugh? Oh! Luke, can he laugh?' It was wonderful to her that the thing which destroyed all her happiness could be to him only the cause of laughter.

'Bess, my dear, I am grieved to the soul that I must tell you this. Alas! he laughs. He can never love you any more. Forget him, therefore. Put him out of your thoughts.'

'He laughs at the girl to whom he wrote

this letter—oh! this dear letter. Why doth he laugh? I cannot laugh, because I loved him.'

She rose, and sighed heavily. 'Well,' she said, 'there needs no more, Luke. I have lost my sweetheart. That matters nothing, does it? Thousands of poor women lose their sweethearts every year, in action and in shipwreck. No one pays heed to the women. What matters one more woman? Oh! I would to God that he was lying dead at the bottom of the sea; and I—and I—and I——' She rushed from the room with distraction in her looks.

There was great rejoicing at the Admiral's, whither I carried the glad news of Jack's promotion. Castilla attributed it entirely to the extraordinary discernment of his Lordship, who deserved, she thought, the highest credit for discovering Jack's real ability and courage, so that he should be promoted, over hundreds of heads, to the command of a frigate, before he was four-and-twenty years of age. Truly, it makes one no happier to be wiser, and Castilla knew nothing about the great lady of Drury

Lane. Heaven forbid that she should learn anything about that ravished kiss!

The day was marked at the Club in the usual manner—viz., by an extra bowl of punch; and I sat beside the Admiral and told the company how his Lordship, in a splendid satin coat, with a red sash and a diamond star, had condescended in person to inform this fortunate young Commander of his promotion. But you may be sure that I told nothing about the actress, even to the Admiral, who marvelled greatly at the boy's success, and wondered, being wise by experience, by whose private interest he had been promoted.

But the woman who ought most to have rejoiced was wandering all night long, in wind and rain, over the desolate moor called Blackheath, raging and despairing because the man who once loved her so tenderly had now forgotten her, and laughed to think that he could ever have thought he loved her. In the morning she came back, mud-stained and draggled, hollow-eyed and wan of cheek, to the parlour behind the Apothecary's shop; and here, pre-

sently, she fell asleep, being wholly spent with suffering and fatigue.

Now, when Mr. Brinjes came from his shop and saw her thus asleep and so pale of cheek, he was moved with compassion, and resolved, though he had not visited London for twenty years, that he would himself try to move the hard heart of her lover. Accordingly, he put off his workday clothes, and reached down his great wig and the coat in which he sat at the Club (both of which belonged to the early years of George I.), and so, fully persuaded that he was dressed quite in the modern fashion of a Court physician, he took oars for Hungerford Stairs, whence he walked to Ryder Street.

On the way, the boys shouted at him, for he cut the queerest figure, his velvet coat being so old that it had turned green in places, his lace in rags, his old-fashioned wig unkempt and shabby. But he walked briskly, careless of the boys, and carried his gold-headed stick with an air of majesty.

'Jack,' he said, dropping into a chair, 'thou art now, I hear, a Captain. Give me a glass of

brandy—'tis a long journey from Deptford—and I will drink to thy good-luck. So—this is a pretty, commodious lodging, Jack. I passed some fine women on the way from Hungerford Stairs. Have a care, my boy. Do not suffer any of the fine birds to bring their fine feathers here; else it may cost thee dear. Be content with some honest wench who will love thee and not try to rob and plunder all the prize-money.'

'Well, Mr. Brinjes'—Jack was not, I think, best pleased to see the old man at his lodgings, and more than suspected the errand on which he came—'can I be of any service to my old friend?'

'That depends, Jack—that depends. The greatest service you could do for me would be not to forget old friends.'

'Indeed, I have forgotten no old friends.'

'Or old sweethearts?'

'Why, as for old sweethearts, my old friend, they may go on so long as to become stale. This, you have often assured me as matter of your own experience.'

'It is quite true,' replied the Rover, who had not looked to have his own maxims thrown in his face; 'it is quite true, I say, that woman is by nature a jealous creature—the nearer to nature you get the more jealous you will find her. Something of the tigress in every one. Wherefore Bess, who is as passionate as a negro woman, is more jealous, I dare say, than a London fine lady, who hath not the heart to be greatly jealous. Also, a woman can never be made to understand such a simple thing as that she ought to be contented with the half-share of a man, or the quarter-share, or even a short six months of his life ashore. Nor doth she ever perceive when the time arrives that she should cheerfully make way for another. Yet—poor Bess! I am sorry for the wench.'

'In South America,' said Jack, talking in the same strain, 'where they smoke the cigarro, one that hath been half-smoked and thrown away is nauseous if it be taken up and lighted again.'

'It is so,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Everyone who

hath been in Guayaquil, which is nigh unto South America, knows that it is so.'

'Wherefore,' said Jack; but left the conclusions to be drawn by the philosopher.

'The thing is so,' Mr. Brinjes repeated. 'Jack, when thy first letter came I knew that the fit was too hot to last. And when no more came I understood very well what had happened. For my own part, I never loved any woman more than four-and-twenty hours after leaving port. Why, I have seen sailors marrying the day before they sailed, and yet coming on board unconcerned. This forgetfulness is a special gift of Providence, intended for sailors alone. But as for Bess, while you thought no more upon her, she had that letter wrapped in a silken bag, and hung about her neck; and every day she kissed and hugged it, thinking—poor, fond soul! women are fools, yet we needs must feel pity for them!—that the writer, like herself, would never change. She began to learn things for her lover's sake; she learned to read and write; she watched the ladies in church to see how they dress, and

how they carry themselves; she made Luke teach her some of their finickin', delicate ways, which don't go down with a sea-pie and black beer, such as you used to love in the days before your breeches were white, and your stockings of silk, and while your buttons carried a simple anchor. Moreover, Bess would no longer consort with her old friends, and would suffer none of the men so much as to have speech with her. And she made Luke tell her what words and sayings of hers would offend the ears of gentlewomen. In short, there she is, my lad, a woman ready for you; as to manners, so far as I understand the matter, as fine as a countess; as to good looks, not a countess of them all can touch her; as to figure—Lord! a finer figure was never made; as to temper, a noble temper, my lad, quick and ready to flame up. What? One that will keep her husband alive, I warrant, and stirring. Why, Jack, we talked of a half-burned cigarro. This one is not yet even lighted. Try it again, dear lad. 'Tis made, I swear, from the finest leaf of Virginia. In South America they have

none such. As for truth and constancy, I will answer for them with my life : and for affection —why, 'tis nothing less than a madness she hath for thee. Come, what want you with fine ladies? They will but play with you when you are ashore, and forget you when you are at sea, while, as for Bess, Bess will keep your house while you are away, and when you come home, she shall be the tenderest wife in the world and like a faithful slave for service. What? You would say that by birth she is below the rank of a Commander? Jack, hark ye!'—here he whispered, as if imparting a great secret—'a beautiful woman hath no rank. There must be rank for men, otherwise there would be no discipline on board the ship. Rank was invented for that purpose; and the pretence is necessary for order's sake, whether we call each other Duke, Earl, and noble Lord, or Captain, Lieutenant, and Master. Yet it is, even with men, nothing but pretence at bottom. But for women there is no rank at all, whatever they may themselves pretend. Which is proved, Jack, by the fact that great men do

constantly fall in love with women of the meanest origin, as witness Charles II. and Nelly Gwynne. You may put Bess upon a throne, and, my word, there is not a Queen among them all would outshine her black eyes and beauteous face. Whereas you will never see a woman of gentle birth fall in love with a clown. Rank is for the ugly women, to console themselves withal, by walking in front of each other. Give me another tot of brandy, Jack; and think of her again, I say. Why, I can never get out of my mind that we shall all three—you and Bess and I—we shall all three sail together across the broad Pacific to pick up my treasure, and to burn the town of Guayaquil, where they made me a slave. I cannot die until that town is burned.'

'I know nothing,' said Jack, 'about your dreams. But, for the rest, you are too late, Mr. Brinjes. I have forgotten the girl. All the past foolishness is over and finished.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Brinjes, looking at him as a physician when he feels the pulse, 'yes': he spoke slowly and sadly, 'I now perceive plainly

that it is all over. The symptoms are clear. Your eyes warm no more at the thought of the girl. Her chance is gone. The poor child hath had her time. Well—I shall go home again. Pray Heaven, my assistant hath not already poisoned a customer or two. Jack, keep out of her way. There will be trouble yet.'

'Why, Mr. Brinjes,' he laughed, 'you do not think that I am afraid of a woman?'

'Nay—I said not that. But—well—we shall have trouble yet. And for these Southern Seas, sure I am that I shall see them again before I die.'

So the Apothecary went away, having done what he could, and having failed.

'We sailors,' said Jack to me presently, 'are great fools in our love for taverns and drinking bouts and low company, so that those are right who represent us as so many dull dogs who have no manners, and can do nothing ashore but drink about. Why, when I came home, three years ago, the Gun Tavern was the height of civilisation, the Apothecary's

dirty parlour was the abode of politeness, and poor Bess was the finest lady in the land.'

'We are mostly such mere tarpaulins,' he continued, after a space, 'that landsmen do well to despise us, though we fight their battles for them, and care not how we are treated, nor how many hundreds they pass over when they make appointments. Then we fall to cursing the service, instead of our own common habits. There was on board the "Tartar" one of the lieutenants (he is now dead) who was a gentleman—I mean by taste and education, as well as by birth—who sometimes talked with me, saying "that 'twas a pity a lad of my appearance and figure (which he flattered) should not study polite manners for the sake of my own advancement, because, with a little trouble, I might certainly attract attention in high places, and so receive promotion." In this he was partly right, though I now find that great men think they can pay for the service of flattery in promises, as a merchant pays for goods with a piece of paper. But there is a

difference, because, if the merchant do not redeem his promise when the day comes, he is dishonoured; whereas if a nobleman doth not redeem his promise, no one throws the fact in his teeth. And if I had not been so lucky as to rescue a certain friend of my Lord, I doubt whether I should have got any appointment, to say nothing of promotion.

'But, lad, consider. Here I live among the best; I am received at a great man's table; I sit in the coffee-house among the wits or the fops, as I please; I go to the theatre, to Ranelagh, and to Vauxhall; there is the gaming-table, if I choose to risk a few pieces; if I am ever disposed for a quiet evening, there is the society of Castilla, the sweetest girl in the world; if for a sprightly party, there are the suppers of my friend—my patron, if you please—and this actress. Think you that after these things I can go back to Mr. Brinjes' stinking parlour, and the Penman's daughter? She may be as beautiful as he says—I care not. She is certain to have coarse hands, rude

speech, and plain manners. You might as soon expect me to go back to the cockpit, and to mess again with the midshipmen, the volunteers, and the surgeon's mates!'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN INTERESTING CASE.

WHAT would be done next I knew not, yet feared something desperate, the case lying (on the one hand) between a woman driven well-nigh mad with love and disappointment, and (on the other) a man of great determination, inflexible to tears and entreaties, and, besides, one who now regarded this poor girl, as he himself confessed, with as much loathing as he had once felt love. I have read in some book of travels that there are certain hot fountains in Iceland which burst forth from time to time with incredible force, and either scald to death those upon whom they chance to play, or, by the ground sinking beneath their footsteps, do suddenly engulf them. We

were now—that is, Mr. Brinjes and myself, who alone knew what was threatening—like unto those who walk upon ground where these fountains break out; for we knew not what ruin might fall upon us at any moment, caused by the hand of a desperate woman.

No one knows the trouble the poor girl gave us at this time, with her changing moods, her fits, and her despair. For sometimes she would sit for many hours swinging her body backwards and forwards, tearing a ribbon or a handkerchief with her teeth; sometimes she would sit quite still, her eyes fixed and glowering; then she would suddenly spring to her feet, and cry aloud that she could bear it no longer; sometimes she would threaten death and murder to her false lover, and to any woman who should dare to take him from her; sometimes she would rush from the room and wander away, till she was forced to come back for weariness; and sometimes she would become gentle again, acknowledge her wilfulness, and beg forgiveness for her bad temper and her wild words. But these occasions were

rare. She spent the whole day in Mr. Brinjes' house—that is, when she was not in one of her restless moods, wandering over Blackheath, or farther a-field, in the woods and fields of Eltham or Norwood. More than once she spent the whole night out, returning in the morning spent with fatigue, her fury only appeased for a time by the weakness of her body. As for her father, she neglected him altogether, so that the poor man was now obliged to provide his own meals, sweep and keep clean his room, and make his own bed. 'Yet,' he said, 'I dare not say a word in remonstrance or rebuke, so terrible is her temper, in which she now seems to surpass her mother, though I confess she doth not beat me over the head with the frying-pan, as my wife was wont to do. Mr. Brinjes, before whom I have laid the case, advises patience. Well, Mr. Luke, I am a patient man. Of that I am very sure. I have been patient all my life—when I was a boy and the stronger boys hectored it over me; and when I was a 'prentice, and my master half-starved me; when I was a married man

and my wife scratched, beat, and cuffed me daily; and now when my daughter is grown up. It is not recorded of the Patriarch Job that his wives and daughters were thus ungoverned.'

Sometimes she would speak of her wrongs, and mostly she was grieved because Jack laughed at her.

'If he were dead,' she cried, 'I could weep for him all the days of my life, thinking he loved me to the end. Oh! I am a fool to care for such a man or to cry over him. He laughs at me. I am a fool. He laughs at me. Why did I not forget him the moment his ship was out of sight, and take another sweetheart?'

'Pity,' said Mr. Brinjes, shaking his head. 'A thousand pities you did not.'

'Hold your tongue!' she turned on him fiercely. 'How dare you speak? You were all in league to mock at me. Why, 'twas thus you beguiled the poor black negro girls, you and your pirate crew. And then you laughed at them.'

'Faith!' said Mr. Brinjes, 'if a man

desert a black girl she generally murders him for it.'

She looked at him strangely, and rushed away, saying nothing.

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'that I told her about the negress's revenge, for she is now capable of everything; and perhaps she will go away and put a knife into his heart.' This he said calmly, as if murder was too common a thing to surprise him. 'There was once a girl —'twas at Providence—whose lover—a smart fellow, too, and one of our crew—deceived her. What did she do? Pretended to forgive him; passed the thing over; treated it as a joke, and played the loving sweetheart to the life, laughing and singing while she served up the poisoned meat that was to kill him. She put in it the herb stramonium, which there grows wild; and the women know its properties very well. She laughed the louder afterwards, while he twisted and rolled on the ground and bellowed in his agony. The men burned her alive for it, because this was an example that might affect them all; but she cared

nothing for the torture; for she had her revenge; and, whatever was done to her afterwards, nothing would hurt her, so long as she could think of that. Look you, Bess is such another as that negro girl. She is as passionate and she is as jealous. There has been murder in her mind ever since Jack came home. I have read the thought in her eyes, and now I have put it into words for her. Trouble will come.'

It was not this crime that I feared, because our women know not, happily, the use of poisons; and the worst among them shrink from taking life. But I feared that she might rashly and in despair kill herself; or commit some act of violence towards Castilla, if she suspected that Jack was paying her attentions; or that she might lose her reason altogether. And indeed, in those days, I am sure that she was partly mad.

You shall learn what she did.

First, she would hear from her former lover's own lips the sentence of her dismissal. She would read her fate in his eyes. There-

fore, one morning, without informing anyone of her intention, she took boat and was carried up the river, and so made her way to his lodging in Ryder Street. No neglect of dress could hide the girl's wonderful beauty, but it was unfortunate, the Captain being now daily in the society of ladies who omit no point in their attire which may help to enhance their charms, that she came to him in a common stuff frock, that in which she was accustomed to do the housework, and a plain straw hat, so that she looked exactly what she was, the daughter of some tradesman of humble station. This, I say, was unlucky for her. Another unlucky thing was that the Captain was not alone in his lodging; and it shamed him that a girl, so common in her dress and appearance, should thus present herself and call him Jack, and remind him of his broken vows. You will expect, when you hear that Bess found a lady in the room, a scene of mad and violent jealousy. But nothing of the kind happened. And yet the situation was one which might very well have caused a jealous woman to fly

out, for the lady, who was none other than the Drury Lane actress, was sitting in a chair, and Jack was standing over her. She was looking up at him with her merry laughing eyes, her hair curled over her forehead, and her face as if it was always and naturally bright and joyous (this thing one constantly sees in women who play upon the stage, though I know not why they should be happier than other folk). Her hood, in which she had been wrapped, and her domino, lay upon the table, and she was dressed most daintily in some flowered silk, with laced petticoat and kid gloves. Now, like a true woman, Bess no sooner saw this finely-dressed lady than she began to think with shame of her own common frock, her hair so rough, and her coarse hands, and to wish that she had put on her best before she left home. I know not what they were talking about, but though the lady was merry, Jack was serious; to be sure he never passed jests with women, and was not even as a boy over fond of laughing with girls; perhaps—some philosopher hath remarked—women like best

the men who treat them seriously, and as if every interview with them gave birth to what the French call a grand passion.

At sight, however, of Bess as she stood in the open doorway, Jack started and stepped forward as if to protect his visitor, with a round quarter-deck oath.

'Oh! my poor ears!' cried the actress, "are we on board ship already?'

Then she marked the face of the woman at the open door, and there was something in her eyes and attitude which made her silent. There is a kind of despair which makes itself felt even by the lightest. This woman she saw had a pale face and large black eyes, which were fixed, steadfastly and piteously, upon the Captain.

'Why do you come here?' asked Jack.

'I came to see you. Oh! Jack!' she gasped, and caught at her heart.

'I have sent you an answer already.'

'I have come to hear your answer from your own lips,' she replied, with trembling voice.

'Come, Bess,' he said coldly, but not unkindly, 'you are a foolish girl; the past is gone. We cannot bring back again what has been. Forget it——and me. And go away. This is no place for you.'

'Forget it? You think I can forget? Have you forgotten, Jack; tell me, have you forgotten?' She clasped her hands and threw them out in a gesture of pain and trouble. 'Oh! have you forgotten—you?'

'I have quite forgotten,' he replied. 'Everything has clean gone out of my mind,' but, of course, his very words betrayed his memory. 'Of course, I remember who you are. Your father taught me arithmetic and writing. You are Bess Westmoreland. We used to play together when we were children. Then I went away to sea, and I remember nothing more.'

'Nothing more,' she murmured. 'Oh! he remembers nothing more. Oh! is it possible? Can he forget?'

The actress looked on with grave attention. She could read the story without being told.

Partly, she was studying a delineation of the passion of disappointed love, rendered better than anything she had ever seen upon the stage; partly, she was filled with pity. An ordinary gentlewoman would have felt, as Castilla feels, that such a girl has no business to suppose that a gentleman can love her, the thing being, in her opinion, contrary to Nature. But the actress knew better. Besides, she understood, which ordinary gentlewomen do not, that beauty is not altogether a matter of dress. A woman who is always dressing herself in different fashions knows that very well.

'If you wish,' Jack went on, 'I will tell you something more that I remember. But you had better not ask me to tell you that. Best to go away now, and before harder things are said.'

'There can be no harder things said. Tell me what you please.'

'I remember a young girl and a boy. The boy had been six years at sea and among savages, and knew not one woman from another. So he thought he was in love with

the girl, who was no proper match for him. And when he had been at sea again for six weeks, of course he had clean forgotten her.'

'And now you have returned, Jack'—she dragged off her hat, and her beautiful black hair fell in long curls upon her shoulders—'look upon me. Am I less beautiful than I was? You, woman'—she turned fiercely upon the actress—'tell me, you, are you in love with him? No: I see it in your eyes; you do not love him. Then you will speak the truth, and perhaps you will pity me. Tell me, then, am I beautiful?'

'You are a very beautiful girl, indeed,' said the Queen of Drury Lane. 'Upon the boards you would be a dangerous rival. Your hair and eyes are splendid; your shape is faultless. Unfortunately, you have not learned to dress.'

'You hear, Jack, what this lady, who is not in love with you, says of me. I have learned things, too, since you went away. I am no longer so plain and rustic, and—— Oh! Jack——' She threw herself at his feet, regardless of the other woman. She must

have known that it was a useless humiliation, yet perhaps she was resolved to drink the cup to the dregs. 'Jack, look upon my name printed upon thy arm; think of my hair tied about thy wrist; think of all thy promises! Jack, think of everything. Oh! Jack, be not so cruel!'

Alas! his face was hard and cruel. As she held up her arms in this humility, he made as if he would push her from him, and in his eyes, once so soft to her and full of love, she read now scorn and loathing.

'Go!' he said. 'You have had my answer.'

Then she rose meekly, and drew from her pocket certain presents he had given her—a necklace of red coral, a packet of ribbons, a roll of lace, the gloves, a broken sixpence, and laid them on the table.

'You shall have again,' she said, 'all that you have ever given me, except one thing. I keep your letter, and your promise. That I will never give you back so long as I live. I know not yet what I shall do. . . . I know not——' She grew giddy, and looked as if

she would fall, but presently recovered, and without another word she left the room.

'Are there many such girls in love with you, Captain Easterbrook?' asked the actress. There were tears in her eyes, but she put up her handkerchief. 'Are there many such in the world, I wonder? They come not to this end of town. Do you write the names of all the women you love upon your arms? Then they will be a pretty sight for a jealous wife, Jack, when you marry.'

'Let her go.' He swept the poor trifles, mementoes of bygone love, upon the floor. 'Let us talk of something else.'

'She is a very beautiful woman,' the actress continued, disregarding his words. 'There is no woman now upon the boards who would better become the part of a queen; and most certainly none who could better act the part she has just played. 'Twas a moving situation, Captain, though it moved you not. I wonder how many women's hearts thou hast broken, Jack?'

'Why, if we come to questions, I wonder

how many men would like to make love to you, fair lady?'

'Captain Easterbrook, it cannot escape your penetration that there is not a pretty woman in the world to whom all men would not willingly make love, if they could. As for constancy, they laugh at it; and promises they despise; they trample upon the hearts of the foolish women who love them; and they consider jealousy in a woman a thing past comprehension.' She laughed, but her eyes were not so merry as when Bess opened the door. 'Well—I am resolved not to have my heart broken, because I have but one, and if it chance to be broken, I doubt if I could piece it together again. Therefore, my gallant Captain, my brave Jack, I doubt whether it were wise of me to come here any more. You may, if you please, come to my suppers, to meet my Lord and his friends. Look not so glum, Captain. Well, perhaps I may see thee once more before thy ship sails. If I do, promise to pretend a little love for this unhappy love-sick nymph! She is a sea-nymph, I take it—one

of those whom the poets call Naiads. Comfort her poor heart a little, and perhaps when thou art gone she may very likely console herself. Alas! always one loves and one is loved.'

'I loved her once. Can she expect——'

'Women are such fond creatures, Captain Easterbrook, that they are not even contented to be a toy for a month or two. As for me, I make men my toys, and as for my heart, it is still mine own. Adieu, thou conqueror of women's hearts and compeller of women's tears. But, Jack'—she laid her hand upon his arm—'look that this poor distracted creature doth not do a mischief to thee or to someone. There was madness in her eyes. I now know how the passion of jealousy should be rendered. It is to stand so, and to look so; and thus to use the hands.' She lost her own face, and became Bess, so clever was she at impersonation, and, in dumb show, went through the pantomime of a scorned and jealous woman. Then she put on her domino, took her hood, and ran downstairs.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW CASTILLA WAS BETROTHED.

I DO not think there is anything in this history more distasteful to Castilla than a certain episode in it, which one cannot choose but narrate. To omit the incident would be the concealment of a thing which clearly shows the disposition of our hero at this juncture of his affairs, when all seemed prosperous with him, but when his fate was already sealed, and destruction about to fall upon him.

Castilla reproaches me with concealing from the Admiral and her mother, first, the previous engagement with Bess, and, next, the acquaintance of the Captain with the actress, of whom mention has been made; and declares that, if the Admiral had known it, he would have for-

bidden the house to so gay a Lothario. Castilla's general opinion as to her father's character is doubtless correct; but as to her father's conduct under certain circumstances, I prefer my own judgment. Certain I am that if the Admiral (now in Abraham's bosom) had known both these facts—indeed, I am sure that he knew a good deal of the first—he would not on that account have shut Jack out of the house, nor would he have forbidden him to pay his addresses to Castilla.

'As for me,' she still says, indignant, even after so many years, 'had I suspected the things which you very well knew at the time, Sir, I should have spurned his proposals. I have now forgiven him, because, poor boy! he was punished for his weakness in the matter of that witch and her adviser, the Apothecary, whom I believe to have been sold to the Devil! I forgive him freely, and, you know, Luke, that I have long since forgiven you for your part in the deception. But there are things which can never be forgotten, though they be forgiven.'

As for my own conduct in the business, I

know not why I should have told the Admiral, or Castilla either, that a celebrated actress and toast had been rescued from footpads by Jack Easterbrook; that he supped at her house, in company with other gentlemen; and that she visited him twice, to my knowledge, in his own lodging, the first time in order to communicate to him the news of his promotion, and the second time—I know not why. I was not a spy upon Jack; and, on reflection, I think that if the thing had to be done again I should behave exactly in the same manner.

Nor do I know why I should have warned Castilla about the old love affair. It was over, and finished. Surely a woman would not be jealous because a lad of nineteen had made an imprudent promise which he afterwards broke, or because he then fell in love with, and afterwards ceased to love, a certain girl, whether below or above his own rank in life? To be sure, I was certain that some trouble would happen, though of what nature I knew not.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that I heard no

more about the actress, but that Jack came often, in those weeks between his appointment and his sailing orders, to the Admiral's, and that he made no secret to me of his passion for Castilla. Also, he took the ladies to various fashionable places of resort which they had never before seen, because there was no one to take them. Thus, we went one evening to Ranelagh, where there was a very pretty concert in the round room, with dancing afterwards, and a great crowd of ladies beautifully dressed, though none prettier than Castilla, to my simple taste. And on another evening we went to Drury Lane, where the actress, Jack's friend, was playing the principal part; and a more merry, light-hearted creature one never beheld upon the stage. I observed that Jack showed no sign of any acquaintance with her, but discussed her performance as a stranger might be expected to do, calling her pretty well as to looks, but then, she was painted up; while as for beauty, give him blue eyes and light hair, at which Castilla blushed. And so home by moonlight, when the watermen are mostly gone

to bed, and the river is comparatively quiet. Castilla sat beside Jack in the boat, and I believe he held her hand.

And, on the day after the play, the Admiral was asked and gave his consent to his daughter's engagement with Jack. He gave it with a livelier satisfaction, he said, than he had felt in any previous event of his life. 'Castilla,' he said, 'this is the greatest day of thy life. For thou art promised to the most gallant officer in the King's Navy. I say, to the bravest and the comeliest lad, and to the best heart, though he shirks the bottle and leaves me to finish it. If thou art not proud of him, thou art no daughter of mine.'

'Indeed, sir,' said Castilla, 'I am very proud of him.'

Jack threw his arms round her, and kissed her on both cheeks, and on the forehead, and on her lips.

I say no more. Castilla declares, now, that she never really loved him, though she confesses that she was carried away by so much passion and by her admiration of his bravery.

Yet I know not. He was a masterful man, who compelled women to love him, and, as the actress said, he had a conquering way with him. I think that if events had turned out otherwise, Castilla would have become a loving, as well as an obedient, wife. But let that pass. They were engaged, and the club at the Sir John Falstaff had a roaring night, in which Mr. Brinjes heartily joined, because at his age 'twould have been a sin to suffer the fear of approaching disaster to stand between himself and a night of punch and singing and the telling of sea-stories.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW PHILADELPHY KEPT THE SECRET.

WHEN one reflects upon this time and upon the conduct of Jack Easterbrook, it seems as if at each successive step the unfortunate man advanced one step nearer to his own destruction. Surely, knowing the grief, the resentment, and the indignation which filled the heart of the woman he had cast aside, with no more consideration than if she had been a hedgerow weed, he might well have reflected before sending her intelligence which was certain to drive her into despair. But, such as he do never reflect.

Therefore, on the very day when he was affianced to Castilla, he took the surest steps to make Bess acquainted with this certain proof of

his desertion. For he led aside the old negro nurse, Philadelphy, and told her that he had a most important thing to communicate, and one which very much concerned her own happiness, and a thing which everybody would be anxious to know; but that it was a profound secret, and must be told to no one, and especially was not to be communicated to any person outside Madam's household.

'I know,' he said, 'that you desire nothing in the world so much as the happiness of your young mistress.'

That she assured him, truthfully, was the case.

'So that I am certain you will rejoice when I tell you the secret. Now, Philadelphy, what should you say if Miss Castilla had a lover?'

''Pends on de young gen'leman, sah.'

'So it does. You are always wise, Philadelphy. What should you say, then, if she was going to be married?'

''Pends on de young gen'leman, sah.'

'You are indeed a wonderful woman, Philadelphy. What should you think, then, if I

were going to be that happiest of mortals, Miss Castilla's husband?'

The old woman looked at him admiringly. Then she began to laugh. Negroes are easily tickled with laughter: they laugh if anyone is hurt; they laugh if misfortunes fall upon their friends; and when they are pleased they laugh: Philadelphy, therefore, laughed for satisfaction and joy, not, as Sarai of old laughed in derision.

'Is dat de troof, Massa Jack?'

'It is the truth, Philadelphy.'

'Ho! ho!' she laughed again. 'Berry fine lover for Miss Castil. Berry fine young man for my young mistress.'

'It is a secret, Philadelphy,' he told her again. 'No one knows it except Madam, and the Admiral, and Castilla, and me. You have been told first of all. That is a great honour for you. But it is a secret as yet. I am to go on board in a few days, and the Lord knows when I shall return. So while I am away do you take care of her, and put in, every now and again, a word for me—you understand?'

She understood very well, and without the

aid of the two guineas which he slipped into her hand, that she was to sing the praises of a certain young gentleman. She folded the money in the corner of her handkerchief, and nodded and laughed again. As a secret messenger, or go-between, I think Philadelphy would have had no equal. Her taste, as well as her genius, lay in this art; but, unfortunately, it was not called into practice, because Castilla had but two lovers, one of whom she lost in the manner you are going to hear, and the other she married without any necessity for a go-between at all.

'You understand,' Jack repeated, 'that it is a secret. You are not, therefore, on any account to tie up your head in your red turban, and to carry the news into the town. You must not think of telling the old fellows at the Trinity Hospital. You must not go to Mr. Skipworth, the Barber, with it; and if you tell Mr. Westmoreland, the Penman, or his daughter Bess, you will make me angry. I quite depend upon your secrecy, Philadelphy.'

The old woman nodded and laughed, and

laughed again, promising that nothing should drag the secret from her. But when the Captain left her, she hastened to tie her red handkerchief round her head, which was her way of preparing to sally forth from the house; and then she began to mutter with her lips. Next she sat down, and laughed again. While she was laughing, two of her fellow black servants came upon her; and, being of a quick and sympathetic mind, they sat down and laughed with her, all three rolling about, digging their hands into their sides, and laughing in each others' faces, while the tears ran down their cheeks. When they were quite tired of this exercise, they left off, and the two old men went away about their own business without so much as asking why she had set them off into this mirthful fit; and the old woman, setting her turban right, walked off slowly in the direction of the town.

She did, in fact, and as Jack fully expected she would do, everything that she had been carefully told not to do. First, she looked into the gateway of Trinity Hospital. On the sunny

side there walked half a dozen of the old men warming themselves. She exchanged a few words with them, admonishing them to keep the secret, and then went on her way. Now, there are no more ingrained gossips than these old almsmen, who have nothing to do all day long except to tell each other stories, for the most part old and well worn, and to retail news. Therefore, as soon as Philadelphy had gone, these veterans, one after the other, left the hospital and made their way, some to the Stairs, and some to the taverns in the town, and some to the Dockyard, spreading the news, for there was no officer in the King's Navy better known than Captain Easterbrook, whom all regarded as a Deptford man, and greatly respected for his courage and his gallant bearing. Moreover, he had among them all the reputation of being a lucky officer. He had gone through so much danger, and hitherto had so miraculously escaped from every kind of peril, that he must needs be a lucky officer to sail with. And now he was going to take command on board as fine a frigate, the French-built 'Calypso', as there was

afloat, and not a sailor but would have liked well to sail with him.

When she left the hospital, Philadelphy looked into the kitchen of St. Paul's Vicarage, just to whisper the news to the maids. Thence she went on her way to the Barber's, and, calling Mr. Skipworth to the door, she imparted the news to him, with many injunctions to profound secrecy, which he faithfully and joyfully promised, and kept his promise in the way common among barbers—namely, that he passed on the news in strict confidence and a whisper to every customer in turn who came to be shaved.

Philadelphy next crossed the street and looked in at the Penman's. Mr. Westmoreland was in the shop, writing a letter for one girl to her sweetheart, somewhere at sea, while another waited her turn. In the corner of the room, beside the fire, sat Bess, her hands folded in her lap, doing nothing and paying no heed to what went on. The girls disputed what should be said; the scribe listened, and from time to time put down a sentence, catching at

their meaning rather than taking down their words.

'Say I keep true and constant,' said one, 'though all the men in Deptford are asking me to give him up. Tell him that. Tell him I expect as much from him when he comes home —else, he shall see. And if he dares so much as to look at. . . .'

'I wouldn't tell him that,' said the other girl. 'Tell him that nobody in the town cares a button for him or even thinks about him but yourself. He'll think all the more of you for that. Don't never let him think you care a rope's-end whether he goes after the other women or not.'

Mr. Westmoreland went on writing while they talked. He civilised, so to speak, their letters for the ladies, taking out the threats, the ejaculations, the accusations, the protestations, and the profane words, whereby he certainly did much to strengthen and to sanctify the bond of affection between the sailor and his mistress, since a lover could not but be moved at receiving a letter so movingly

and so religiously expressed. It must surely be a great thing for a man to think of his sweetheart as a quiet, sweet-tempered, and well-conducted woman (as always appeared from these letters), capable of expressing the finest sentiments in the choicest language, and full of gentle piety. Pity it was that when the men came home their mistresses should always fail to talk and to behave up to the standard of their letters.

Without troubling herself about the girls, Philadelphy took a chair beside Bess, and began to whisper. Now, so carefully had Bess kept her secret that no one in the place knew a word about it except Aaron Fletcher, and, for reasons of his own, he spoke of it to none. Least of all did this old negro woman suspect it. She whispered what she had to say, and then, with a hundred nods and winks, used as signs of mystery and secrecy, she got up and went away.

Bess sat still awhile. The two girls finished their business with her father, and went away. Mr. Westmoreland looked timidly at his daughter.

'Bess, my dear,' he said.

She shook her head impatiently.

'Is there any chance that you will come round soon, my dear? I wouldn't hurry any woman's temper on my account, though I may say that it is a month and more since I have had any dinner.'

'If I had a knife in my hand this moment,' she cried, springing to her feet and tossing her arms in the air: 'if I had a knife, I would drive it into my heart—or into his!'

Her father made haste with trembling knees to return to his writing.

That there are times when the Evil One is permitted to have power over us we are well assured, not only from Holy Writ but from the teaching of learned doctors. I say not that we are to be excused from the consequence of sins committed during such times, because it is on account of our sins that they are permitted. This poor girl, I am very certain, was possessed by the demons of jealousy, rage, and despair. Else the great wickedness into which she now fell would never have been possible to her.

Heaven forbid that I should attempt to excuse her! But this day she was mad. On this day, as you will presently confess, she must have been mad.

She continued to sit in the same place, hands clenched, with set eyes gazing straight before her, and cheeks white. From time to time her father looked furtively round. But seeing no change, he went on with his work. Presently he became afraid to sit alone with her. He thought she was mad; he feared that she might get up suddenly and stab herself to death, or, perhaps, stab him in the back. He was never a brave or a strong man, and besides, he had already suffered so much from feminine wrath that he considered a raging woman worse than a tigress, and would cheerfully have fought a lion in the arena rather than face his own wife in one of her angry moods. But he had never before seen Bess so bad as this. It wanted a good hour of his usual time of leaving off work, but he got down from his stool, changed his coat hurriedly, and went out to his tavern.

If he went there an hour before his usual time, it was fully an hour after his usual time that he returned. Bess was still in her chair, but she no longer sat upright, scowling and fierce. Her head was buried in her hands, and she was weeping.

Mr. Westmoreland was afraid to speak to her. He crept silently upstairs, and went to bed supperless.

For in truth, something very strange had happened between the time when the Penman laid down his work and the time when he came home. The jaws of Death and the gates of Hell had been opened.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW BESS WENT OUT OF HER WITS.

IMMEDIATELY after her father had left the house—perhaps he waited until the Penman's departure—a man came to the door and stood without. For a few moments he watched and listened. Then he pushed the door open and looked in. The room was dark, and he could see nothing.

'Bess,' he cried—it was Aaron Fletcher—'Bess, I know you are here, and it is no use hiding. Come out this instant and talk with me, or I will come in.'

There was no answer, and he stepped into the room.

'You can go out again, Aaron,' said Bess. 'I have nothing to say to you.'

'I will go out when I have said what I came to say, and not before,' he replied. 'If you will listen, Bess, I have a good deal to say.'

'Say, then, what you have to say, and begone.' He hardly knew her voice, which was hard. 'Of course, I know very well what you have come to say. When you have said it once, you can go. If you dare to say it twice, I think I shall have to kill you. But, before you take the trouble to say it, or anything else, I tell you that it is no use. There is no man in the world for me now. Don't think of trying.'

'Bess'—the man understood what she meant—'d'ye think that I would come to crow over your trouble? Why—but you don't understand: you never did understand. A man as loves you true can't choose but be sorry for your trouble. I love you that true that I should even like to see you married to him, if he would have you. But he won't; he won't. Don't go to think now, Bess, that I'm glad; though I always knew what would

happen, and I hoped that you would perhaps throw him over and take a better man, and then we might have seen him crying and lamenting, instead of you. Pluck up spirit, Bess. Curse him. . . . With his head in the air and his step as if he was on his quarter-deck, and us men were all his crew, and you women were all for his own pleasure! Curse him, I say, for a villain! He went through the town just now dressed as if he was a nobleman, at least, with the people crying after him for luck, and the fools of women calling blessings on his head for a handsome man, if ever there was one. Curse him! Bess, why don't you curse the man who has played you false? Hast never a tongue in thy head?'

It was too dark to discern her face, otherwise Aaron might have been well pleased with the jealous madness which filled her eyes.

Then he cursed the Captain again, and with stronger words; but she answered nothing.

'I knew what he would do. I always knew it. I hate him, Bess! I have always hated

him as much as you hate him now ; or almost as much, because you must hate him after all he has done so that there is no evil you would not rejoice to see falling upon him.'

He paused for some effect to be produced by his words, just as an angler throws his line and stops to watch his float. But Bess made no sign.

'Who is he?' Aaron went on. 'Who is he that he should have all the good luck and I should have the bad? Why, when he came to the town he was in rags. I saw him come. He was a boy in rags. And now he is a Captain, with a gold-laced hat, and I—— Well, Bess, I am a bankrupt. That is what I have come to. And it is through him! Yes, through him and through that one-eyed Devil, who is Old Nick himself, or sold to him, I am a bankrupt—I am broke! First, through him, I lost my boat, the "Willing Mind," took by a privateer ; and then, through him, I lost the prize-money I looked to make ; and then, through him, my building-yard was burned. And now I have spent all my money, Bess,

and am broke. And all through him! I will be even with him, some day, if I swing for it.'

'Say what you have to say, Aaron, and go away:'

'I came to say, then, Bess'—he lowered his voice—' will you have revenge?'

'What revenge?'

'I tried to take it for myself three years ago. Did he never tell you who got him knocked o' the head and carried off to the crimp's? 'Twas the sweetest moment of my life, when he lay senseless at my feet. I done it, Bess. 'Twas none but me. He got off that time. He won't this.'

'Revenge? Do you think I will let you take revenge for me?'

'Bess—think! He hath deserted you, and broken his promise. And me he has brought to beggary, with the help of his friend the Devil with one eye.'

'I will have no revenge taken for me, I say. Go, Aaron. If that is all you have to say, go, and leave me alone. Revenge will not

bring back his heart to me. He loathes me now as much as once he loved me. I saw it in his eyes. Will revenge change his eyes? There is nothing for me but to bear it till I die.'

Aaron sat down on the table. The tempter to evil was not to be sent away by a single word.

'What!' he asked. 'A woman of spirit, and do nothing, though her sweetheart proves false to her, and mocks and laughs at her! Have they told you how he laughs everywhere about you?' (This was a lie: Jack never spoke about her among his friends.) 'Why, the gentlemen all do it; they make bets with each other about such girls as you; and then they go away and tell each other, and laugh about her. Oh! you forgive him. 'Tis sweet Christian conduct. I suppose I should forgive him as well for the loss of the "Willing Mind," and the burning of my boat-yard?' He stopped to see if his words had produced any effect upon her: but she gave no sign. 'You will dance at his wedding, I dare say. He is going to

marry the daughter of the Admiral—him with the wooden leg.'

'He is not married yet.'

'He is going to be married,' said Aaron—but this was also a lie—'by special license, and without banns, to-morrow; for his ship is under orders, and the Captain will set sail in a few days. He wants to be married before he goes. 'Tis a pretty little lady, and he will make her happy. They say he is head and ears in love with her, and nothing too good for her. I dare say he was always a fond lover. You found him a fond lover, didn't you, Bess, in the old days?'

'Are you sure?' she asked. 'Oh! the old woman did not tell me this. Are you quite sure? To-morrow? He will marry her to-morrow? So soon. Oh! is there no hope left at all?'

'The negro woman went about the town to-day telling everybody. You can ask her if it is true. What do I know? The Captain was not likely to tell me, was he? Well, Bess, it must be a pleasant thing for you to be think-

ing that his arms are now round her neck, which used to be round yours. He is kissing her red-and-white cheek now, just as he used to kiss yours, in the old days when he used to make a fool of you. And to-morrow, he will be happy with his bride. That is something to make you feel forgiving and well-wishing, isn't it?'

'Oh! I shall go mad!' she cried. 'I cannot bear it; I shall go mad!'

'To be sure, there are differences. She is a gentlewoman, and you are only a tradesman's daughter. She is soft, and has pretty manners, I dare say, though her father is an old salt. Whatever you are, Bess, no one ever called you soft. She is fair, and you are dark. She loves him, I dare say, better than you ever could. She can wear a hoop, and carry a fan, and paint her face, and, as for you, Bess——Why, what is the matter?'

'I will kill him first!' she cried, wildly. 'Aaron, I will kill him with my own hand!'

'Nay, Bess, why with your own hand, when there is mine ready for your service? And as

for that, you are in such a rage that you would surely bungle it ; ten chances to one you would botch and bungle it. Now, I am calm. If I take it in hand, I shall make as pretty a job of it as anyone can desire. Besides, Bess, if anyone is to swing for putting such a villain out of the way, it shall be me, not you, my girl. For love of you, and hate of him, I should be content to swing. But maybe. . . . Why, Bess——'

'Aaron'—she laid her hand upon his shoulder, catching her breath short—'oh! I would rather see him dead and in his grave than let him marry her.'

'He must be dead to-night then, or he will marry her to-morrow. Hark ye, Bess, the time has gone for crying. We must do it at once—this very night. To-morrow he will be married. The next day, or the day after, he takes the command of his ship. This very evening he hath gone to the Club with the Admiral. He will but drink a single glass of punch with the gentlemen, who will wish him joy, and will then return to his new mistress,

with whom he thinks to spend the evening kissing and making love. Do you mark my words?'

'Yes yes I am listening.'

'In half an hour or so he will be returning by this road. Suppose, Bess, he should meet us on the way—the woman he has deserted and the man he has ruined?'

'Let us go!' she cried. 'Let us go at once. He shall never marry her. Let us go! Why, Aaron, are you for hanging back?'

'There is time enough—no hurry. See, my girl, I have brought with me—'tis all I have left of my privateering—a pair of ship's pistols.' He lugged them out of his pockets and laid one on each leg, still sitting on the table. 'They are loaded; I loaded them half an hour ago, a brace of bullets in each, and the flints are new. No hurry, Bess. Let us consider.' She was already more than half-mad, but he thought to madden her still more. 'Let us consider. All the world knows thy history, Bess.' This, too, was a lie, because no one knew it. 'When you go forth again the

women will point and say after you, "There goes the girl who thought to marry the handsome Captain! There goes Bess, who thought to be the wife of Captain Easterbrook! Pride goes before a fall. Now she will have to marry some honest tarpaulin, like the rest, if any be found to have her." 'Tis a hard fate, Bess. Whereas——'

'Aaron, let us go. Quick! quick! Give me the pistols.'

'Nay—nay. You to have the pistols?' he replied, in no hurry, and still trying to madden her. 'Whereas, if we take care that he shall marry no one, they cannot cry out after you, and he shall not have another wife.'

'I would rather he were dead,' she said. 'Aaron, let me kill him with my own hand!'

'Will you come with me?'—he put up his pistols—'or will you stay with me? 'Tis but five minutes' walk to the dark place in the road where we stopped him once before. But come with me. If you stay here, you will know nothing till I come back, when the job is done. If you come with me, you shall see it done.

Why, your revenge will be doubled if you stand by and see it done. And when he falls, Bess, cry out quick that it was thy doing. So, in his last moments, he shall feel that thou hast revenged thyself.'

'Come—quick—before I repent! Let us kill him quickly! Oh! Aaron, I am all on fire! I burn. Come——'

Aaron nodded his head, and leisurely rose, satisfied at length with the spirit of murder which he had called up. It made her pant and gasp and tear at his arm to drag him along.

'One word, first,' he said. 'I am not going to do this all for nothing. When the job is done, Bess, you will marry me?'

'Yes. You may marry me, or you may murder me. I care nothing which. Oh! he shall never marry her—never! Come, Aaron, come! We shall be too late!'

I say that she was mad. It could not be in any other mood but madness that Bess would become a murderess. Truly, Aaron was a crafty and cunning man, thus to turn her

thoughts to revenge, and to make a murder done for private wrongs—but did Jack set fire to his boat-yard, or take the 'Willing Mind'?—seem as if it was a righteous act of retribution for her sake. Why could he not murder his enemy without dragging Bess into the crime with him? I know not: but I suppose that he thought to bind her to him by the guilty secret which the two would have between them; as if the knowledge would not keep them apart: for, with such a secret, the whole breadth of the world should not be wide enough to keep the two asunder. But it is impossible so much as to guess at the secrets of Aaron's mind at such a moment. One thing is certain, that, like Bess, he was driven well-nigh desperate by his misfortunes, which, however, he was not justified in laying on the Captain. Perhaps he had no thought at the time, except of revenge, and no other desire than to gratify Bess—whom still, I believe, he loved, after his manner—and himself in the same manner, and at a single blow.

'Come,' he said.

Then he directed her to go on in advance, so that if anyone should pass her on the road they might not connect him with her as a companion, and ordered her to wait for him in that place where the grass strip broadened into a little roadside green planted full of trees. Here she was to await him.

'Twas the same place where, three years before, Aaron had made his first attempt, the failure of which might have deterred him, one would think. But it did not. Here he presently joined the girl.

'No one is abroad,' he said. 'I have passed none upon the road. That is well. Heart up, Bess! In a few minutes thou shalt be happy, if revenge can make thee happy. He will kiss his fine mistress no more.'

'Happy! There is no more happiness for me. Oh! Aaron—quick—do what thou hast to do quick, lest I repent and stop thee. Oh! Jack—my Jack—must I murder thee?'

'Keep dark,' said Aaron. 'Why, you are losing heart already. I am sorry you came with me. Keep dark, I say, and look not forth

until the shot is fired. As for me, I scorn to hide. I am here to kill him if I can, or let him, if he can, kill me. He has a sword, and I have my pistols. Let him fight it out. It is a fair battle between us. But keep back, Bess, and keep dark. I think I can hear his foot-step.'

When, three years before, Jack Easterbrook had walked along the same road at the same time, his head was full of love for the very woman who now stood in the shade of the trees waiting to see him done to death. From the madness of jealous women, good Lord, deliver the men! And from the inconstancy of per-jured lovers, good Lord, deliver the women!

As she stood and listened, the sound of his footstep—she could not be mistaken in the step—fell upon Bess's ear, and immediately the Captain himself was to be plainly seen in the twilight, walking briskly along the road. As for Aaron, in spite of his brave words, he kept in the shade of the trees, feeling, doubt-less, as is the way with murderers, more con-fidence while in hiding than in the open.

Before she heard his footstep, the poor girl, the prey of all the evil passions, stood breathing quickly, her hands clenched, burning with rage, and mad for revenge. Yet, mark what happened. At the very first footfall, at the first sound of the step which still she loved, the whole of her madness fell from her as a woman's cloak may fall from her shoulders; her heart stood still, her knees trembled, and her love went out again to him. Also she saw —now, was not this a thought sent to her direct from Heaven's throne of mercy in order to save a poor sinner from a dreadful crime?— she saw, I say, in imagination, her lover lying dead upon the ground, his pale face turned up to the stars, never to come back to life again, and she herself standing over him—who had murdered him. Already she felt upon her forehead the seal of murder as it was placed upon the front of Cain. Already she felt the terrible remorse of murder. Near every crime can be atoned for, except murder. You may rob a man; you may slander him; things stolen may be replaced; things said may be with-

drawn: but his life you cannot restore to a man. Therefore there is no crime so dreadful as murder, and no remorse so fearful as that of a murderer, even when his conscience is as hardened as that of Aaron Fletcher himself. 'Oh!' Bess told me afterwards, though the poor girl knew not how to put all these her thoughts into words, but could only speak of them brokenly, 'I thought that if he were to die, I must die too, and that with no hope of forgiveness, so that I should never sit beside him in Heaven, and never ask his mercy. And I saw that if he would leave me, he must; and, oh! how could I be so wicked? How could I? No; it was not Aaron's fault; 'twas my own mad, jealous heart.'

There wanted but a moment when Aaron would have stepped out and discharged his pistols. There was no relenting in him; he had no qualms of conscience and no forebodings of remorse. He had lost everything —his sweetheart, his boat, his business, his fortune—by this man, he thought; 'twas little

revenge indeed, in return for so much injury, to kill him. Perhaps, afterwards, with the gibbet in sight and the irons on his legs, he might have felt remorse. But one doubts, seeing how hardened are most of the villains who go forth to Tyburn to the fatal tree, and how little true repentance the Ordinary doth witness.

He was waiting, then, the pistol cocked. His enemy was almost within his reach when Bess rushed out from her hiding-place, crying, 'Jack! Jack! Save yourself! Save yourself!'

He stopped, and drew his sword.

'Fly!' she cried; 'Aaron is among the trees with his pistols. We came to murder thee. Oh! fly for thy life. Let him kill me instead. He shall shoot at thee through my body!'

She stood before him, her arms out as if to stop the pistol-bullet.

'Stand aside, Bess,' said Jack. 'Now, Aaron, ye cowardly, skulking dog, come out! Show yourself, man! Bring out your pistols,

I say! Come, ye sneaking, murdering villain!'

Aaron might have shot him on the spot where he stood, breast bared, so to speak, for the pistol. But he did not, because so great is the power of authority over such men as Aaron, when one speaks who is in the habit of command, that he obeyed and came forth meekly, his pistols in his hand, like a dog who comes at call to be whipped.

'Lay down your weapons,' said Jack, sword in hand.

Aaron obeyed, saying nothing

'So,' said the Captain, 'this is now the second time that thou hast attempted my life. Man, if I had thee on board my ship I would keel-haul thee, or maybe hang thee for mutiny. Know, sirrah, that the mere conspiring to murder hath brought many a poor rogue to the gallows. Now, I know not wherefore thou didst resolve to make this second attempt. Remember, however, that the first score is not yet paid off. Yet I heard some talk of losses and the burning of boat-yards, whereby it

seems as if some greater Power had interfered to punish thee. Go, now. Perhaps to-morrow I shall determine what further may be done.'

Aaron obeyed, walking away slowly and sullenly, the pistols lying on the ground.

Then Jack turned to the girl who had saved his life. 'So, Bess,' he said, 'you came out to murder me, did you?'

'Yes,' she confessed.

'I was in hopes that you had laid my words to heart, and had forgotten the past.'

'I can never forget the past. Oh, Jack! 'tis too much to ask of any poor woman. 'Tis too much!' She burst into crying and weeping. 'Oh! I am an unhappy wretch, who would even murder the man I love better than all the world.'

'Nay,' said Jack, 'there is no harm done, because — d'ye see—I am unhurt, and you changed your intention in time. If I did not know thee better, Bess, I might think that this was a trick of thine. But Aaron hates me of old; and you—since I came home.'

'I have never hated you, Jack. God knows I wish I was dead, and out of your why.'

'My poor girl, you are already out of my way, if you would only think so. For the sake of a few love-passages three years ago, way waste and spoil your life?'

'I cannot take back what I have given. To-night they told me that you are to marry Miss Castilla. That made me mad. But I am not mad any longer. Go to your new mistress, Jack. I will give you no more trouble—no more trouble. Make love to her as you did to me. Tear her heart out of her as you tore mine. I will give you no trouble—no trouble at all. I will not try to stand between her and you.'

'Foolish girl! Forget me, Bess, and find another lover.'

'I have tried to curse thee, Jack, but I cannot. Oh! I cannot. I have tried a dozen times. My lips will not form the words, nor would my heart mean them if I could say those words. I have tried this night to

kill thee. But I could not. Therefore it is certain that I am not to do thee any harm. This is better, because, whatever happens, thy heart will not be thereby the more hardened against me.'

Jack made no reply. Perhaps he was touched by what she said.

'Go, Jack. Go to thy mistress.' This she said, not rudely or scornfully, but quietly. 'Jack, I know now what has been lying in my mind. It is that I have a message for thee. It is that GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, and *that in the way that will touch thee the deepest.* I know not how that will be, and, for myself, I desire no harm for thee. I will henceforth neither speak nor think hard things of thee. But remember: no other man shall ever kiss me, because I am thine, Jack—I belong to thee. Oh! Jack, my sweetheart, my love, GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, unhappy boy! *and that in the way that most will touch thee!*'

Jack laughed lightly—yes, he laughed—and went his way.

This is what happened between the time when the Penman left his daughter and the time when he returned. Said I not that the jaws of Death and the gates of Hell were opened on this night?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW BESS RECOVERED HER SENSES.

WOMAN is a variable and a changeable creature. Many poets and philosophers have insisted upon this maxim. Mr. Westmoreland, as well as Socrates, had good reason to feel the truth of it, and could testify to it from his own experience, under the rule of wife first, and of daughter afterwards; though the capricious nature of the latter empress was a kind of heaven compared with the clapper-clawings, rubs, and buffets which marked the reign of the former. The next morning the Penman came downstairs meekly resigned to do the daily necessary house-work, which his daughter should have done—namely, to lay his desk in order for the day's work, find something for

breakfast, and, towards the hour of noon, interrupt his calculations in order to prepare dinner of some kind—which had been his lot for the last two months: in fact, though he had not the wit to connect the two events, ever since the return of the Lieutenant on board the French prize. He was, therefore, truly astonished when he saw that the room was already swept clean and tidy, a coal fire lit, for the autumn morning was cold, and his breakfast set out upon the table, just as he loved to have his food, ready to his hand, without any thought or trouble about it; both plenty as regards quantity, and pleasing as regards quality. More than this, his daughter Bess was busy with a duster among his papers—no one but Bess knew how to take up a sheet of paper, dust the desk about and under it, and lay it down again in its place. She wore a white apron, her sleeves were turned up above her elbows, and she was going about her work steadily and quietly, as if nothing at all had happened. More again, when she saw her father, she smiled, and saluted him. Now, she

had not smiled, or said a single gracious thing to him for two months and more.

'Come, father,' she said, 'take your breakfast while the beer is fresh and hath still a head. The cask is well-nigh out, and I must have another brew. The knuckle of pork has got some good cuts left yet; as for the bread, it is dry, because it is baker's bread, and last week's baking. But to-morrow you shall have some new home-made.'

This was a very strange and remarkable change. Nothing at all had happened to make her happier. On the contrary, her lover was certainly going to marry Castilla, and he was going away: her affairs were as hopeless as they could well be. Yet now her soul was calm. It may be that one cannot go on for ever at a white heat of wrath; but some have been known to brood over their wrongs all the days of their lives. Her soul was calm. That was the change which had fallen upon her; her eyes were no longer fierce, and her cheek was no more alternately flaming red and deathly white. Nor did her lips move continually as if

she were vehemently reproaching someone. Her face was soft again. She told me afterwards, speaking humbly and meekly, that when she had tried to curse her unfaithful lover, her lips refused; and when she had tried to murder him—her heart failing her at the last—the words that she said to him—namely, that she would seek no more to harm him, and would think no more of him with bitterness, feeling assured that God would bring the thing home to him in such a way as would touch him most surely—these words seemed as if they were whispered in her ears or put into her mouth; and then suddenly, as she uttered them, all the rage and madness which had torn her for two months left her, and peace fell upon her heart. Those who please may put upon this confession any other meaning; for my own part, I can see but one. What that interpretation is, I leave to the reader.

Mr. Westmoreland, however, when he observed this change, fell to shaking and shivering, betraying in his looks the most vivid apprehensions. The reason of this phenomenon

was that in the old days before his wife ran away from him—Bess during the last two months had in other respects greatly resembled her mother as to temper—whenever a domestic storm of greater fury than usual was brewing, it was always preceded by a period of unusual activity in the house, with a strange and unnatural zeal for cleanliness and tidiness. The memory of this fact, and of the terrible storms which afterwards used to break over the poor Penman's head, caused this awakening of terror. Was Bess in this respect also going to take after her mother?

'Child,' he stammered, 'what—what—what in Heaven's name hath happened to thee? Have I wronged thee in any way? Tell me, Bess, only tell me, what have I done to thee?'

'Why, father, nothing. I have been ill lately. Now I am better. Sit down and take your breakfast. For dinner you shall have something better than cold knuckle of pork.'

He obeyed, wondering and distrustful.

'I've been ill of late, father,' she repeated;

'and you've been neglected and uncomfortable. It's my fault that the room was this morning up to my ankles in dust and dirt. But I've been very ill, and couldn't do anything but think of the pains in my head.'

'Well, Bess,' he replied, rallying a little, 'to be sure you've been a bit—so to speak—haughty, for the last two months. It came on, I remember, about the time when the Lieutenant came home.'

'It was about that time, father. Two months ago I first began to have these dreadful pains in the head.'

'If it was toothache you should have gone to Mr. Brinjes, and had it out. If it was tic, there's nothing to help it but a charm. But why not ask Mr. Brinjes to charm it away?'

'It was not toothache. I dare say it was tic. But now it has almost gone.'

'Was it, Bess—was it'—he dropped his voice—'was it anything to do with Aaron Fletcher? Sometimes I've thought there might have been a love disappointment. Was it Aaron Fletcher?'

'Aaron Fletcher is nothing to me, and never will be.'

'Well, I'm glad to hear that, Bess, because Aaron is a bad man—a man of violence; a crafty man, my dear—a headstrong man—a man without virtue or religion—and an unforgiving man as well. I've watched Aaron, man and boy, since he was born. Aaron will end badly. Of late he has been drinking, and his business is broken up. Aaron will come to a bad end.'

'Well—that's enough said about me, father. Go on with the cold knuckle.'

'And now shall I hear thee singing about thy work again, Bess? and laughing again just as before? It does my old heart good to hear thee sing and laugh. Nay, that doth never put me out, though I be struggling with the sine and tangent and even with the versed sine. 'Tis when I hear thee weep and groan, and when to all my questions I get no answer, and when thine eyes are red and thy cheek pale, and when all day long I see thee sitting neglectful and careless—'tis then, my dear, that the

figures swim before my eyes and the result comes all wrong. 'Tis then that if I try to write, my flourishes are shaky, and the finials lack firmness.'

'Nay, father,' she replied, 'I fear I shall not laugh and sing again all my life. The kind of tic which I have had takes away the power of laughing and the desire for singing. But I hope never again to be so troubled.'

'Alas!' said her father, 'I would I were a preacher, so that I could exhort women to good temper. Sometimes when the learned and pious Vicar is expounding the wisdom of the Chaldees—which is, no doubt, a most useful subject for the Church to consider—I venture to think that a word might be spared on the sins of temper and on the hasty tongue and the striking hand. Truly, for my own part, in all things but one have I been singularly blessed, yea, above my fellow-creatures. For I have a house convenient and weather-tight; I belong to the one true Church, being neither a Papist nor a Schismatic; I am assured of my salvation, through no merits of mine own; I am not of

lofty station but obscure, yet not of the vilest herd; I live sufficiently, and, when my daughter pleases to exercise her skill of housewifery, with toothsomeness; no man envies me, and I have no enemies; 'tis true my shoulders are round and I am weak of arm, but what of that? To crown all, I have been endowed by beneficent Providence with the love of divine mathematics and the gift of fine penmanship, so that my work, whether I copy, or engross, or write letters, or work out logarithms, or consider the theses, lemmas, corollaries, problems, and curious questions advanced by ingenious professors of the exact sciences, I live all day long in continual happiness. I would not change my lot for any other, save and except for one thing. I am filled with pride, which I hope is not sinful, because it is in gratitude for the gifts of Heaven. But there is one thing, my child. I have wanted no blessing in this life, which to many of my fellow-creatures is, for no seeming fault of theirs, a vale of misery and of tears. But, alas! I still found my comfort spoiled by the temper of thy mother while she remained

with me. And I feared, Bess—I say that I feared—lest thou might also take after her, and so the scoldings, the peevishness, the discontent, and the violence might begin again. I am not so young as I was then, and I doubt whether I could endure that misery again.'

'Fear nothing, father. Why, whenever did I ask or do aught to make you think that I should upbraid you? As for my temper, I will try to govern myself. Fear nothing, father. To-day you shall have as good a dinner as you can desire, to make up for the past shortcomings. What will you have?' She spoke so gently and softly that her father was quite reassured, and plucked up his courage.

'Well, child, since thou art in so happy a disposition—Lord, grant that it continue!—I would choose, if I may, a hodge-podge, with an onion pie. They are the two things, as thou knowest well, which most I love. With hodge-podge, onion pie, and a merry heart, a man may make continual feast.'

It was not a merry heart that returned to

poor Bess, but it was the outward seeming or show of cheerfulness which not only returned but remained with her, so that she now listened to her father's garrulous prattle with apparent interest, and gratified his love of good feeding by toothsome dishes, of which there was no more notable compounder than herself. This day especially she regaled him with a most excellent hodge-podge, in itself a dish fit for a king, and also with an onion pie, a thing counted dainty by those of a strong digestion, though to some who have a delicate stomach it may be thought of too coarse a flavour, being composed of potatoes, onions, apples, and eggs, disposed in layers in a deep pie-dish, and covered over with a light crust of flour and suet.

While Bess was engaged in the preparation of this banquet, the Barber came running across the road, as was his wont when the morning business was completed, and he had any news of importance to communicate—for the spread of news at Deptford is in this way. First it is whispered at the Barber's shop, then it is

whispered by the Barber to his customers and his cronies, and next it is carried by them in all directions around the town.

'Have you heard the news, friend Westmoreland?' he asked, with the air of one who is the possessor of an important secret.

'Why,' Mr. Westmoreland replied, 'since I have not seen you before this morning, gossip, how should I hear any news?'

'You will be astonished,' said the Barber. 'Those who hold their heads the highest fall the soonest. One whom you know well, friend, and have known long, is broke. Ay, you may well look surprised and ask who it is. He is broke, who, but a short time ago, was master of a thriving business, and seemed as if he would save money.'

'Who is it, then?'

'I have myself suspected a great while what would happen. For, thank Heaven, I can see as far as most men, and can put two and two together, and am no babbler of secrets, but keep them to myself, or talk of them with my friends over a pipe of tobacco and a glass,

being a discreet person. Wherefore, when I heard of certain accidents, and saw in what a spirit they were received, I made up my mind what would happen.'

'Who is it?' asked Mr. Westmoreland, when this garrulous person had partly talked himself out of breath.

'It is a man whom you know well; and Bess, here, knows him very well, too.'

'If, Mr. Skipworth,' said Bess, 'you would tell my father your news, we could then talk about it afterwards.'

'Why, then, Aaron Fletcher is broke. That is the first news. Since the burning of his yard, he hath done no work, not even to putting up some shed and carrying on the business. What were we to think of that? When he went privateering he made but little prize-money, but had quickly to come home again. Thenceforth he hath been living on his stock, and hath now come to an end, and is broke. This morning he was to have been arrested. The writs are out for him, and the officers came to seek him with intent to take him to the

Marshalsea, where his case would have been tried at the Palace Court.'

'Would have been tried?' asked the Penman. 'Is it not to be tried, then?'

'I said *would*, because for one thing which his creditors thought not of—he hath escaped them. Otherwise he would have languished in jail until his death.'

Here the Barber wanted to be asked further what was that happy incident which had enabled Aaron to 'scape prison; for one who is a retailer of news loves not to expend it all at a breath, but must still keep some back.

'His father,' he continued, 'was a substantial man, and saved money, which the son has spent. He inherited, besides the building-yard, a good business, and a fast smack, the "Willing Mind," for his trade across the Channel. Now the smack is lost, the yard is burned, the business is ruined, and the money is spent.'

'An idle fellow,' said Mr. Westmoreland; 'a fellow who loved not work. But how hath he escaped his creditors?'

'He will not go to prison; for in the night,

we now learn from certain authority, he walked over to Woolwich, where he hath enlisted in the Marines, and so is beyond the reach of his creditors, who cannot now arrest him. So he escapes the prison, and exchanges the Marshalsea for a man-o'-war. Maybe 'tis better to be killed by a cannon-shot than to be starved in a debtors' gaol.'

So, after more reflections on the folly of young men and the certain end of laziness and extravagance—which have been put more concisely by King Solomon the Wise—the Barber returned to his shop; and before noon everyone in Deptford had heard the surprising news of Aaron's fall.

This intelligence made Bess tremble, thinking on the madness of the last night, when this young man was so desperate, being now assured that he was bankrupt, that he was ready to commit a murder, caring little whether he was found out and hanged, or no; and she herself was so desperate in her wrath and jealousy, that she was ready to commit murder in order to prevent another woman's happiness. Why,

what would be the condition of that guilty pair now, were Jack lying dead? Since, however, Aaron was bankrupt it was now certain that he had already resolved to go away and enlist in the Marines, when he came to her and proposed the crime; and that he intended to leave the dreadful secret of the murder, had it been committed, to herself alone—a burden greater than she could bear.

For Aaron, 'twas the only way of escape, to 'list in one of His Majesty's regiments. Naturally, he chose the Marines as the branch belonging to the sea. To carry a musket on board a King's ship, after being a Lieutenant in a privateer, not to speak of commanding the 'Willing Mind,' is to come down in the world, indeed. Yet that he cared for little, considering the alternative of a debtors' prison, terrible to all, but most terrible to a man who, like Aaron, had spent all his life in the open air; and most certainly it is better for the country that a stout and active fellow should be fighting her battles than that he should be laid by the heels in a prison doing nothing. Mark,

however, what followed. Aaron walked to Woolwich that night, where there is a depôt for Marines, which in that war represented twenty-five companies. He enlisted in the morning. When they began to teach him his drill it was found that he already knew as much as is expected of any recruit when he is passed for service. Therefore he was, with others, marched to Chatham ready for embarkation. There are many remarkable coincidences in this history, but there is none more remarkable than the fact that Aaron should have been shipped as a Marine on board the very ship, the 'Calypso,' of which the man he had tried to murder was Commander. This circumstance, with the consequences which followed, I can regard as nothing but providentially ordered.

When Aaron discovered who was the Captain of the ship, he fell at first into despair, and was ready to throw himself overboard, looking for floggings continually and on the merest pretext, with keel-haulings and every kind of tyranny, oppression, and punish-

ment. But he presently found that the Captain took no kind of notice of him, even when he was on sentry duty on the quarter-deck, and seemed not even to know that he was on board.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HOW PHILADELPHY REFUSED A BRIBE.

WHEN Bess had given her father his hodge-podge and onion pie, which he received as some compensation due to him for all past privations and recent neglect, she left him, and repaired to the Apothecary's.

Mr. Brinjes was already wide-awake, and in earnest conversation with Philadelphy. On the table between them lay the famous skull-stick, object of the deepest veneration and awe to the negro woman.

'What will you do for me,' he was saying, 'if I give you this stick? I am old now, and I have no enemies to punish, nor many friends to protect, and I want nothing for myself except that which not even an Obeah man can

procure for himself—his lost youth. . . . What will you do for me, Philadelphy, if I give it to you?'

'Massa Brinjes'—she clutched at the stick, and held it in her arms, kissing the skull—horrid thing!—which grinned at Bess as if it were alive, 'I will do everything. Ask me—tell me—I will do everything.'

'We shall see. Those who possess this stick—it must be given, not stolen, or the virtue vanishes—can do whatever they please. Why, if it were your own, there would be no woman in the country so powerful as you. If you have enemies, you could put Obi on them, and go sit in the sun and watch them slowly dying—Ha? I have seen the wise women on the West Coast sitting thus, and watching outside the hut wherein their enemy lay wasting away. And if you have friends, think of the good fortune you could bring them. Why, Miss Castilla you could marry to a Lord; not a beggarly ship Captain, but a rich Lord.'

'No—no,' said Philadelphy. 'She shall marry Mas' Jack. No one like him.'

. 'You could make her as rich as you could desire. If she wants children, you could send them to her. No need, then, to consult the cards, or to watch the birds, because you could have everything your own way to command, once you get the skull-stick. As for wind and rain, you could call for them when you pleased. See'—he rose and looked up at the sky, which was covered with driving clouds, the wind being fresh. 'See—you would like rain! 'Twould be good for Madam's garden, would it not? I call for rain.'

Strange! As he spoke, the drops pattered against the windows. Though 'twas a light and passing shower, yet it seemed to fall in reply to his call. He might have seen it on the point of falling, and prophesied after the event was decided: truly, Mr. Brinjes was crafty and subtle above all other men. But Philadelphy jumped, and kissed the stick again. 'You see, Philadelphy,' he went on, 'what you could do with this stick. It is wasted on me, because I am too old to want anything. I am past ninety, and you, I should think, are not

much over seventy. If I die before I give the stick away, it is lost: its virtue is gone. But there is still time. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?' He paused and considered a little before he went on again. 'Perhaps you think it will only compel rain, and is of no use as regards persons. Well, here is Bess to testify that I put Obi on Aaron Fletcher. He was formerly a thriving man, until he offended me. What hath happened to him since? First, he was tortured with toothache; next, his smack was taken by French privateers; then he went privateering himself, and did no good; then his boat-building sheds were burned, with all his tools and timber; lastly, he went bankrupt, and hath now, I fear, enlisted in the Marines to escape a prison. I have removed the Obi, and now leave him to his fate. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?'

Again the old woman clutched it and kissed it, with the unholy light of witchcraft in her eyes. I wonder if the Sorceress of Endor had a skull-stick.

'Stop a moment, Philadelphy. What will you do for me?'

'Everything, Massa Brinjes. Nothing in the world that I will not do for you.'

'There is only one thing that I cannot make my stick do for me. Everything else in the world I can do. But this thing I cannot do, and you can.'

Still clinging to the stick, the old woman implored him only to let her know what that was, in order that she might instantly go away and do it.

'Bess hath a sweetheart, and he hath proved a rover, as many sailors do. Bring him back to her arms and keep him constant, and I will bestow the stick upon thee.'

'Nay,' Bess cried quickly, 'since my sweetheart loves me no longer, I will have no charms to make him. I have promised besides, that I will trouble him no more.'

'Tell me his name,' cried the old woman, regardless of Bess. 'Only tell me his name, and I will do it for her.'

'Can you bewitch a man at sea?'.

'I can, I can,' she cried. 'I will make his heart soft for her, so that he will forget every other woman, and want none but Bess. Why,' she said, 'every negro woman knows a love charm.' This with some wonder that a wizard of Mr. Brinjes' power, and possessed of an Obeah stick, should not be able to do so simple a thing. 'I can make him love her all the same as he loved her at first. I can make him love her so as he shall never love another woman. If that is all, Massa Brinjes, let me carry away the stick.'

'Softly, softly. The thing is not done yet. If I give thee this stick I shall never get it back again. Wherefore, let us have it paid for first.'

'Tell me his name, then.' Philadelphy turned eagerly to Bess, 'Only tell me his name, girl, and I will make the charm to-day.'

'Nay,' Bess repeated, 'I want no charm to bring him back.'

'Be not so proud, Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'you shall have what your friends can get you. As for you, Philadelphy, be not too ready.

What? You think I would give such a stick for a trifle? You think Bess's lover is some common sea-swab, I dare say—a master's mate, at best, or a gunner, or perhaps a shipwright. No, no; her lover is another guess kind, I promise you.'

'If he was an Admiral, he should come back to her. Tell me his name.'

'Even if he were promised to marry your young mistress, Miss Castilla?'

A negro woman cannot turn pale, particularly one so black as Philadelphy, nor can her colour come and go like that of a white woman: yet she changes colour when she is moved. Philadelphy not only changed colour, but she gasped and looked upon Mr. Brinjes as one astonished and dismayed.

'To marry Miss Castilla?' she repeated.

'What if Bess's lover had deserted her for your young mistress?'

'Don' say that—oh! Massa Brinjes, I cooden do it—no—no—I could do anything else, but I cooden do it even for the stick.'

'I say, Philadelphy, what if his name was

Jack Easterbrook? Why, it is Jack. It is the Captain who was Bess's lover. Where were your eyes not to discover that? You, a witch! Where were your eyes, I say?'

'I cooden do it—no—I cooden do it.'

'Look at the stick again, old woman. Think of the joy of having the stick your own. Think of what you could do with the stick to help you. What is the Captain to you, compared with the possession of the stick?'

She looked at it with yearning eyes. 'Suppose that the thing which all your life you have been taught to regard as the symbol and proof of power was to be offered you at a price. This was the old negro woman's case—she could have the Obeah stick in return for—what?

'At the worst,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'it would make her unhappy for a week.'

'No—no—Miss Castilla, she dun set her heart upon the Captain.'

'Well,' the tempter continued, 'with the help of the stick you can not only find a rich and noble lover for her, one who will make her

happy, but you can also give her a charm and make her forget the Captain.'

'No—no,' said the old woman, 'Miss Castilla will never forget the Captain.'

'Then, when his fancy returns to his old love, which it will do before long, your young mistress will be made unhappy. Come, Philadelphy, think of this stick; think of having it your own—the great Obeah stick.'

'Who are you'—she turned fiercely upon Bess—'to take away a young gentleman officer? Stay with your own people, and let the Captain stay with his. Massa Brinjes, if I give you the secret to keep alive—ten—fifty—a hundred years if you like—will you give me the stick?'

'If you have that secret, old woman,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I will tear it out of you, if I have to rack every joint in your body with rheumatism. If you know that secret, it is as good as mine already. No, Philadelphy, it is the Captain or nothing. Look at the stick again, Philadelphy. Take it in your hands.'

'Oh! I will get the girl—what a fuss about

a girl! As if she was a lady!—I will get her any other man in Deptford. Plenty handsome men in Deptford.'

'I want none of her charms, Mr. Brinjes, for Jack or anyone else,' Bess said again. 'Let her have the stick, if you like, and let her go.'

'There!' Philadelphy cried, triumphantly. 'You see? She wants none of my charms. Why, there, take the secret instead, and let me have the stick, and you shall live for a hundred years more.'

Here one cannot but admire the way in which these two magicians believed each in the other's powers, but were uncertain about their own. For—first—if Mr. Brinjes, by means of his skull-stick, could draw down rain from the sky, why could he not move the Captain's heart? And, next, if Philadelphy could turn a faithless lover back to his fidelity, why could she not so order Castilla's heart that she should resign the Captain without a pang? But this she could not do. Yet the wizard believed in the witch, and the witch in the wizard.

'It must be Jack,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'or nothing.'

'Then,' she replied, sorrowfully, 'it is nothing. Put away the stick, Mr. Brinjes, lest I die of longin', and let me go.'

He replaced the stick in the corner. The skull grinned at the old woman as if in contempt because she had missed so magnificent an opportunity.

'Very well, Philadelphy,' said Mr. Brinjes, returning to his pillows. 'I do not believe you know any charm at all. You know nothing. You are only an ignorant old negro woman. In Jamaica they would laugh at you. You are not a wise woman. You only pretend to make charms. Why, anybody could make as good a charm as you.'

She shook her head, but made no reply, still gazing at the stick.

'All your tricks are only pretence. You cannot, in reality, do anything. As for your cards, you cannot even tell a fortune properly. If you can, tell Bess hers.'

Philadelphy drew from her pocket a pack

of cards, greasy and well worn, and began to shuffle them and to lay them out according to her so-called science. Bess, who would have no charms, could not resist the sight of the cards, and looked on anxiously while the old woman laid out her cards and muttered her conclusions.

'The dark woman is Bess,' she said—'the fair woman is Miss Castilla—the King of Hearts is the Captain. Oh! the dark woman wins!' She dashed the cards aside, and would go on no further, but, with every sign of alarm and anxiety, rose up, and, tightening her red turban, she hurried away.

'Always,' said Bess, 'she has told me the same fortune. Always the same. Yet I know not.'

'These divinations by cards,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'are known by many women even in this country, where there is so little wisdom. I wonder if Philadelphy lied when she offered to sell me that secret. If I thought she had such a secret—but I doubt, else why doth she continue so old and grow so infirm? No; she

hath not that knowledge, which I must seek on the African coast. Bess, take courage. We will sail to that coast—you, Jack, and I; we will be all carried away together; and, first, I will find that secret, and, next, we will go forth to the Southern Seas, and there dig up the treasure of the great galleon.'

She shook her head.

'As for me,' she said, 'there will be no sailing away, with you or with Jack, nor any happiness at all; and as for you, Daddy, when you are carried away it will be with feet first.'

'Perhaps! Yet I doubt! For I do continually dream of those seas, and clearly discern the ship, with myself upon the poop, and the island not far off, where at the foot of the palm-tree there lie the boxes. All shall be thine, Bess—to dispose of as thou wilt.'

'Why,' said Bess, simply, 'what should I do with it but give it all to Jack?'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW BAD NEWS CAME HOME.

NOTHING at all was heard of the 'Calypso' for three or four months. It was not even certain whither she had sailed, except that she was with Sir Edward Hawke's fleet. But it was known that M. Thurot had got out of Dunquerque with five frigates, on board of which were a large number of troops, with intent to make a descent upon Ireland, and we conjectured that perhaps the 'Calypso' might have been ordered to join the squadron in chase of that gallant Frenchman. But that proved not to be the case.

It was in January—namely, on the evening of the 15th of January in the year 1760—that the news arrived which filled the hearts of all with shame and confusion. 'Twas a wild and

tempestuous night, fitting the nature of the intelligence which then arrived. The wind blew up the river in great gusts, and the rain drove slanting into the faces of those who were out. I remembered, afterwards, that I had met Philadelphy in the morning. The old woman was always full of omens and prognostications. Sometimes she had seen a ghost in the night—surely there was never a greater ghost-seer than this old negress—and sometimes she had been warned by one of the many signs which terrify the superstitious. 'Hi! Massa Luke,' she said, in her negro way, which it is unnecessary to imitate, 'there's bad news coming, for sure. Last night the cock crowed twice at midnight, and an owl screeched round the chimney; there was a dog barking all night long, and I saw a ghost. There's bad news coming!' I asked her what the ghost was like, but she refused to tell me. Well, it is true that on many other occasions she foretold disaster (because to this kind of witch there are never any signs of good luck), and her prophecies proved naught. But on this

day, alas! she proved a true prophetess of evil.

At the Sir John Falstaff some of the company, including Mr. Brinjes, who was never late, had already arrived, and were hanging up their hats, the candles being lit, a great coal fire burning, pipes laid on the table, and the chairs set.

'There hath arrived bad news,' said Captain Petherick, the Commissioner of the Yard. 'I heard talk of it at the Navy House this morning. It is said that we have lost a frigate. They say also that we have lost her cowardly—a thing which one is not ready to believe. But I have not heard the particulars, and I know not the name of the craft. 'Tis pity, but 'tis true, that there should be found in every war cowardly commanders, in British as well as in French bottoms. Those of us who have memories can remember the last war, gentlemen. Well, we must quickly build or capture another ship, and find a better Captain. We will give the command to Jack Easterbrook.'

So saying, he sat down and began to fill his pipe leisurely. Just as he had finished these words, and before Mr. Brinjes had time to do more than to open his mouth, there came running into the room the landlord, having in his hand the 'London Post' of the evening, brought down the river from town by some boatman. His face was pale, and his eyes full of terror.

'Oh! gentlemen,' he cried, 'gentlemen! Here is such news! I cannot trust my eyes. For God's sake read the newspaper! But who shall tell the Admiral?'

'Is it news from the Fleet?' asked Captain Petherick.

'It is, your Honour.' The man looked as if he was afraid to tell his news. 'Oh! gentlemen,' he repeated, 'who shall tell the Admiral?'

'Is it bad news?' asked Mr. Brinjes.

'It is the worst news possible. Gentlemen —it is—it is. . . .' he looked about him to see if the Admiral was, perhaps, present, hitherto unseen. 'It is news of—of—of

Captain Easterbrook, gentlemen. Of no other, indeed.'

'What!' cried the Apothecary; 'bad news? The worst news? Then is our boy dead.' He sat down in a chair, and looked from face to face. 'Jack is dead.'

'It is the worst news possible,' repeated the landlord.

'Jack is dead,' said all together, looking at one another in dismay.

'Jack is dead,' repeated Mr. Brinjes. 'There hath been an action, and Jack hath fallen. Poor Bess! Yet, now he will never marry the other.' The company knew not what he meant. 'Well, every man must take his chance—I looked for other things—but.... Jack is dead! Some die young, and some die old. To those who die old it seems as if their years have been but a dream. What matters, therefore, when a man dies? Wherefore, devil take all black negro witches with their lying prophecies!' Again the company asked themselves what Mr. Brinjes might mean.

The landlord shook his head.

'No, sir. No, gentlemen. Oh! you will not understand. Read the 'Post.' Captain Easterbrook hath lost his ship.'

'If,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'he lost his ship, of course he first lost his life or else his limbs. He would not be taken below while there was yet life enough left to fight his ship.'

'Gentlemen,' cried the landlord again, 'your Honours will not listen. It is in the 'London Post.'

He held out his newspaper, but no one offered to take it. Everyone knew now that something had happened worse than death. Then they heard the Admiral's step as he entered the house and stumped along the passage with his escort of negroes.

'Gentlemen,' said the landlord again, 'who shall tell him? Again he held out the paper. They looked at each other and held back. No one offered to take the paper; they were afraid. It is one kind of courage to walk up to a cannon's mouth, and another to become a messenger of bad tidings.

Then the Admiral came in, followed by his

two negroes. He saluted the company cheerfully, and gave his hat and cloak to his servants. This done he took his seat in his usual place. But the other gentlemen standing about the fire did not, as was customary, follow his example. They hesitated, looked first at the Admiral and then at the landlord.

'Gentlemen, be seated,' said the Admiral.

'Sir'—it was Mr. Brinjes who spoke—'it appears that bad news hath arrived.'

'What news?'

'It is—news of Captain Easterbrook.'

'Is the boy . . . is the boy dead?' asked the Admiral.

'Sir, we cannot but suppose so. For he hath lost his ship. But as yet we have not seen the 'Post.'

'No—no,' the landlord again interposed, holding out the 'Post,' which no one would take. 'Gentlemen, stand by me, I beseech you. Sir, the Captain is not dead.'

'Then, poor lad,' said the Admiral, 'he is grievously wounded, and like to die. Our boy,

gentlemen, is grievously wounded, and like to——' Here his voice failed him.

'No, Sir, he is not wounded.'

'Then he is shipwrecked and drowned. Why is the man staring like a stuck pig? Alas! gentlemen, our boy is drowned.' But the Admiral looked uncertain, because the company, now understanding that something out of the common had happened, looked at each other and at the landlord, and spoke not.

'Sirs'—the landlord again offered the news-paper to one after the other, but no one took it —'the news is here printed. Otherwise, God forbid that I should dare to say such a thing. Your Honour, it is here stated that the Captain struck his colours in the very beginning of the action.'

'Struck his colours!' The Admiral caught the arms of his chair, raised himself as quickly as a one-legged man may. 'Struck his colours! Jack struck his colours! Ye lie, ye drunken swab! Ye lie!' With that he delivered so shrewd a blow with his gold-headed stick that, had not the landlord dodged, he would have

been enabled instantly to carry the news into the next world. 'Ye lie, I say!' Here his voice failed him, and his face became purple, and he reeled and would have fallen but Mr. Shelvocke and Captain Petherick caught him and set him in a chair, where he gasped and panted and looked as if he was about to have a fit of some kind. As for the landlord, he stood in a corner, pale and trembling.

'Give me the paper,' said Mr. Brinjes, when the Admiral had somewhat mastered his passion. 'Let us at least read what is here stated.' He read it silently. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'this is a strange business. I understand it not. Here is more than meets the eye. It is a thing hard to understand. I will read it aloud. Courage, Admiral, the story is impossible as it stands.

'"Despatches have been received from Sir Edward Hawke. He reports an affair which, unless later intelligence contradict it, is more discreditable to British honour than anything which has been done since the cowardly flight of Benbow's captains. The frigate 'Calypso,' Captain John Easterbrook, with her consort the 'Reso-

lute,' Captain Samuel Boys, fell in at daybreak with a squadron of the enemy, consisting of three frigates, one of them being the 'Malicieuse.' The names of the other two are not given. The Frenchmen bore away on discovery of the Union Jack, and the British ships gave chase. After some hours the 'Calypso' came up with the 'Malicieuse,' the hindmost of the three, the 'Resolute' being then a quarter of a mile or so astern, though crowding all sail. It is reported by Captain Boys, he being then on his quarter-deck and glass in hand, that the engagement was commenced by the 'Malicieuse' firing a shot from her stern-chaser which struck the 'Calypso'; that then he saw Captain Easterbrook strike his colours with his own hand; that his officers ran about him, and he cut one down; that the Frenchman immediately lowered a boat and boarded the prize, driving the crew below; and that the other two French frigates backed their sails, whereupon he withdrew from the chase, thinking it useless to engage three vessels at once; that he was not pursued; and that he

knows no reason at all why the ship was surrendered without firing a shot. 'Tis thought that the 'Calypso' hath been conveyed to Brest. This account is the more extraordinary by reason of the character for gallantry possessed by Captain Easterbrook, who was one of Captain Lockhart's Lieutenants on board the fighting 'Tartar.'"'

'This is a very strange story,' said Captain Petherick. 'By your leave, Mr. Brinjes, I will not believe it.'

'Thank ye, old friend,' said the Admiral, hoarsely. 'My boy surrender? Never, sir, never. Damme, Mr. Apothecary, wilt thou try to persuade us that such a thing is possible?'

'Nay, Admiral, nay; I do but read what is printed. Lord forbid that I should doubt the boy. What is this? Ay, they have begun already their pestilent verses. 'Twill be just as it was with Admiral Byng, when the journals were full of squibs. Listen now. Oh! they care nothing about truth so long as they can turn a verse and raise a laugh. Listen.'

'"The following lines have been picked up at the Rainbow. 'Tis thought they come from the Temple :—

> The Frenchman crowds all sail in fright,
> The Briton crowds all sail to fight :
> The brave 'Calypso's' gallant tyke
> Claps on all sail in haste to strike.

And these have been recited at Dick's—

> The Captain brave his ship would save,
> And so this great commander
> Cries, 'Heroes, I will scorn to fly
> While I can still surrender.
> Stay, Frenchman, stay : your shot may play
> Too rough among my hearties ;
> I fear no foe : but yet I know
> To strike the better part is."'

'Oh! 'tis a lie—'tis a lie,' the Admiral groaned. 'Gentlemen—my boy, Jack! Gentlemen, I say. . . .'

'We cannot believe it, Admiral,' said Captain Petherick. 'Yet it is in the despatches.'

'There is something we are not told,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'But, without doubt, the "Calypso" is taken prisoner, and someone on board struck the colours.'

The Admiral stared about him with amazement and confusion in his eyes. Then he rose slowly. 'I shall go home, gentlemen. I wish you good-night. Someone shall swing for this lie. . . . Someone shall swing.' He moved towards the door, forgetting his hat and cloak, which one of the gentlemen reached for him. 'Someone, I say, shall swing for this—this diabolical lie about my boy Jack. We shall see—damme, I say, we shall see! What, sirrah, the lantern not lit?' Indeed, it was not the duty of the negro to keep the candle burning through the evening; but the Admiral belaboured him so lustily that the fellow roared, and the company trembled lest he should be killed. But a negro's head is hard. Then the Admiral walked away. This was his last night with the Club; he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff.

The gentlemen, without his presence, sat awhile speechless. But the landlord brought in the punch, and they presently filled and lit their pipes and began to whisper.

'Do you think, sir,' asked Mr. Brasil of the



"The Admiral moved towards the door."

Apothecary, 'do you think that the story may be in any point of it true?'

'Why,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'as for truth, I suppose that is never got at, and this nut is hard to crack. How such a man as Jack Easterbrook could haul down his flag before the action began passes understanding. But then how men like Captain Boys and his officers should be deceived, when only a quarter of a mile distant or thereabouts, one cannot understand either. And that the ship is taken one cannot doubt.'

'If he comes home he will be tried by court-martial, and for cowardice,' said Mr. Shelvocke.

'That is most certain,' said Captain Petherick: 'and if he surrendered cowardly, he will be shot. Gentlemen, this is an event which affects our own honour. For though the boy is no blood relation of any here, he hath been our pupil, so to speak. We have taught him. He is our son in whom we hoped, and in whom we believed. It is not the Admiral alone who is struck. It is this company of honourable

gentlemen who would have maintained to their dying day that Jack Easterbrook could never turn out a coward. Why, a more gallant lad never trod the deck, as witness Captain Lockhart, of the "Tartar," where he served. I say, gentlemen, this affects us all. We are brought to shame by this untoward and unexpected event.'

'Perhaps,' said one of the company, 'the Captain was shot at the outset, and it was the First Lieutenant who hauled down the flag.'

But that seemed impossible, no one could fail to discern Captain Easterbrook at so short a distance, if only on account of his great stature. Besides, Captain Samuel Boys was known for a sober and honest man, who would certainly not invent so grievous a charge against a brother officer.

'Perhaps,' said another, 'the ship was foundering.'

Then they read the statement again, trying to extract from it, if possible, some gleam of hope or doubt. But they found none.

'Gentlemen,' said the Apothecary, 'I hope

I shall not be thought to be a man over-ready to believe this monstrous thing if I submit that it may be true, and that the act was made possible by one of those sudden madnesses which the people believe to be the possession of the Devil. We read of poor women, in such fits, murdering their own tender children; and of husbands beating to death their wives, without a cause; and of learned scholars who have gone forth from their books to hang themselves without any reason for despair. No man is at all times master of his own actions; and doubtless there are in the brain, as in the body, weak places, so that just as one man falleth into an asthma, or a rheumatism, or the gout, by reason of bodily imperfections, so may a man by mental disorder commit acts of false judgment, foolish conclusions, and mad acts for which there is no accounting. Nor can we anticipate or prevent such attacks. I once knew as brave a fellow as ever stepped, to snivel and cry for an hour together: and why? Only because he was sentenced to be hanged. Yet he walked manfully to the gallows in the end. And

another, who fell on his knees and wept aloud because he was to have a tooth out, which he dreaded more than he did the three dozen he had received a month before.'

'Then, you think, sir,' said Captain Petherick, 'that the boy may have been mad?'

'I know not what to think. I tell the company what I have seen. Some acts, I declare, are not consistent with what we know of the man's previous life. What should we think did the Reverend Vicar of St. Paul's suddenly fall to singing a roaring tavern song of Poll and Nan? Yet that would be no whit the worse than for Jack to become suddenly coward. There are some who say that men are thus afflicted by Divine Visitation. That may be. A congestion of the liver and the mounting of vapours to the head may likewise produce such effects. Yet we do not call a liver disease a Divine Visitation. I remember once, being then on the coast of Yucatan, a very singular thing. Landlord, the bowl is out. I say, gentlemen, that I once witnessed a very singular thing. There was a young fellow with us of

five- or six-and-twenty; a daredevil dog who had faced death so often that he feared him no longer, and was looked to lead the way. The enemy showed fight, and we came to close quarters, when the word was given to board. What happened? He leaped upon the enemy's deck with the greatest resolution, and then, to our surprise, he turned tail and fled like a cur, dropping his arms and crying out for fear. We tried that man, gentlemen, when we landed, and we shot him for cowardice, just as Jack Easterbrook will be tried and shot, if he be fool enough to come home. 'Twas a pity, too, for after he was dead we found out the reason of this strange behaviour. He was bewitched by an old woman to revenge her grand-daughter, his sweetheart, who was mad with him on account of his many infidelities. The girl came out and laughed in his face while he was led forth to execution. Afterwards, she confessed the crime to some of the girls; and when they began to talk of it, she took to the woods, where, no doubt, she presently perished. The old woman we punished. The night before she

was executed, I went privily to her and offered her poison, if she would give me her secrets, and especially the secret by which she knew how to prolong life as much as she pleased. But she refused, being an obstinate old woman; and next day the men gave her a bad time, being mad with her. Gentlemen, we are not on the Spanish Main; and there is no witch among us, except Philadelphy, the Admiral's negro woman, who would not, if she could, put Obi on Jack. Yet if this story be true, then I doubt not that our boy was clean off his head, and no longer master of himself, when he struck his flag.'

CHAPTER XL.

HOW THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED.

THE next despatches brought confirmation of the news. There could now be no doubt at all that the 'Calypso' had been surrendered by the Captain, and that without striking a blow. The consternation and shame which fell upon us cannot be described; nay, not upon us only, but upon the whole town of Deptford, to whom Jack was nothing short of a hero.

'There is nothing,' said my father in the next Sunday's sermon, 'there is nothing, my brethren, upon this earth which is stable. Our riches make themselves wings and fly away; disease falls upon the stoutest and strongest of us; old age palsies our limbs; death snatches away the youngest and brightest. Even in the

very spring and heyday of life, when promise is strongest and hope most assured, the qualities of which we are so proud may fail us suddenly, and without warning—so that the brave man may lose his courage, the loyal man become a traitor, and the strong man fall into the weakness of a girl. Remember this, my brethren, and in the day of your strength be humble.' Those who listened applied the words to the disgraced Captain, and hung their heads.

But the Admiral and his household were not in church. They sat at home, the flag half-mast high, Madam and Castilla, by the Admiral's orders, in black, as if in mourning for one who is lately dead.

'He is dead, Luke,' said the brave old man. 'My gallant boy, the son of my old friend, my son-in-law who was to be, is truly dead. How he died, and where, I know not. But he is dead, and his body is occupied by an evil spirit. What? Shall we be ashamed because this cowardly Devil hath struck the colours? 'Tis not our boy. He is dead. Castilla weeps for him; but, as for me, I always looked that

he might die early, as so many others do—being killed in action, or cast away. As yet we know not how he died, or how the Devil was permitted to walk about in his body. Perhaps we shall never learn.' But here he broke off, and choked. 'What an ending! What an ending is here!—truly, what an ending! Why, if one had foreseen it, 'twould have been a Christian act to put a knife into the boy's heart when he came here sixteen years ago; and a joyful thing, had one only known beforehand what would happen, to be hanged for it afterwards.'

I said that I hoped he would be able to write us some words of consolation.

'Consolation? Why, the Captain struck his flag without firing a shot! Consolation? There are some things, my lad, which can never be forgiven or forgotten. Cowardly to surrender is the chief of these. Cowardly! Oh! that it should seem possible to use that word of our boy!'

Then I said that it would be best for him to stay abroad, and never to return to England.

'Ay,' said the Admiral, 'unless he should resolve to come back and be shot. The women say he is bewitched. But who should bewitch him? No: our boy is dead, and some evil spirit is in his body.'

This was the only consolation that the poor old Admiral permitted himself. Yet it did not console. He stayed at home, being so covered with shame that he durst not venture forth, lest the boys should point at him. He told me so; and it went to my heart thus to see this brave old man wounded and bleeding, yet to know no single word of consolation.

'Luke,' said Castilla, 'do not, if you please, mention his name to me. We must resign ourselves to the Heavenly Will. No doubt this affliction hath been designed for some wise end.'

This must always be the Christian's view; yet, in my ignorance, I have sometimes questioned the course of events which thus afflicted and presently destroyed a brave man in his old age, undeserving of this disgrace.

I know not who first started the rumour—

perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes himself—but it was presently spread over all the town, that the Captain was bewitched. And so great was the popular indignation that, had the people known what had passed with Bess Westmoreland, I make no doubt they would have murdered her. Fortunately, there was no suspicion at all. No one had seen them together, or knew that there had been any love-passages between them, or any jealousy. Most certainly they would have murdered her, the women especially being full of wrath against the unknown author of this misfortune.

But I was uneasy—listening to the talk of these termagants, as they gathered in the streets, and cried out what should be done to the witch—lest someone should turn suspicion upon Bess. As for Philadelphy, who would have been suspected, it was known that the Captain was to marry her young mistress, and therefore she could not be the witch. Now, of wise women, who know the properties of simples, and can read the signs of good and bad luck, and tell fortunes by cards, there are

always plenty; but of witches there was in Deptford only one, and of wizards only one, and both of them known to be friends of the Captain.

'It is true, Luke,' said Bess Westmoreland, when I found her in the usual place. 'Do not talk as if it were not true, because I am assured that the news is true. Why, I knew that something terrible was going to fall upon him. Mr. Brinjes says there may be some mistake in the evidence of Captain Boys; but I know better. It is quite true. What will happen next, I know not. But I shall have my lover back again, whatever happens. The fortune always ended in the same way with love at last.'

'Whatever happens, Bess? Why, he is now a prisoner of war, and, unless exchanged, will remain a prisoner till the war is ended. And if he ever return he will be tried and shot.'

'Then he will stay where he is, and send for me,' she replied, as if the recovery of her lover, should that be brought about, would be cheaply purchased at the cost of his honour.

But women know little of man's regard for honour. 'He will send for me; and if it were to the ends of the earth, I would go to him.'

'Bess,' I whispered, 'it is rumoured abroad in the town that he was bewitched. Is there anyone who knows what passed between him and you when last you saw him?'

'No one knows except you, Luke. Aaron knows, but he is away.'

'Then speak to no one about it. Let it not be suspected that you predicted this disaster, or the people, I verily believe, would burn you for a witch, Bess.'

'Why, are they such fools as to think that I would suffer a hair of his head to be touched if I could help it? For Jack loved me once —how he loved me once!—three years ago! And I—oh! I love him always. What do I care what he has done? Let him but hold up his finger to me and I will go to him. I will be his slave. Oh! Luke, I would suffer gladly that he kicked and flogged me daily so that he loved me. What do I care about his disgrace? That touches not me. My Jack will always be

the same to me, whatever people may say of him.'

'My poor Bess,' I said. 'Indeed, he hath a constant mistress. But, my dear, do not look to see him more. I fear we shall never be able to set eyes on his face again, for he cannot show his face among his fellows. The common fellow pays for his sins with a flogging, and when his back is healed, he thinks no more of the matter. But the Captain—look you, Bess—it is a most dreadful thing. For, whatever happens, he can never more sit among honourable men.'

'He shall sit with me, then,' said Bess. 'As for what I told him, the words were put into my head—I know not how. They were a message. I was made to tell him. They were not my words; wherefore I knew that they would come true.'

Thus, while the rest of us were overwhelmed with shame, she who loved him best (because now I clearly understood that Castilla had never loved him so well, else she could not have been so quickly and so easily resigned

to her loss) thought little of the deed and much of the man. Thus it is that a woman may love a man, so that whatever he does, whether he succeed or fail, even if he does disgraceful and shameful things, she will love him steadfastly. In Bess's simple words, he is always the same man for her.

'As for me,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I am very sure that the lad was bewitched. I know not by whom, because Philadelphy would work all the charms she knows for his help, for Miss Castilla's sake. But bewitched he was. Wherefore, Luke, my lad, I shall wait until we learn where he is at present bestowed, and then I shall send him a letter. He must not look for a return to England at any time, unless he joins himself with the Pretender, and hopes to return with him. But no: he must never return at all. And as for that young man, he is now near forty, and will never come to England again, I take it. But though Jack cannot come back here, I see no reason why we should not go to him; and so we might together set sail for the Southern Seas, and there dig up my treasure, and equip

and man a stout squadron for the harassing of the Spanish fleets.'

'Why, Mr. Brinjes,' I told him, 'you are now an old man—ninety years and more, as you have told us often. Is it for a man of ninety years to brave the hardships of the sea once more?'

'Hardships! Little you know of peaceful sailing among the sunny waters of the islands. There are no hardships and no discomforts. Why, 'twould make me twenty years younger to be back again in the Pacific Ocean and in those latitudes. I should be little more than seventy. What is seventy? A man is still green at seventy: he is in the full vigour of his manhood; there is nothing that I could not do at seventy, ay, and as well as the youngest of them all, save that my limbs were a trifle stiff, and I no longer cared to run and jump. But that stiffness sometimes falls on a man at six-and-thirty, wherefore I could not complain. Seventy! Ah! To be seventy again, with thirty years more to live! And then, if one were so lucky as to fall upon the great secret,

another thirty, and another thirty after that, and so on as long as one chose to live. And that, my lad, I promise you, would be until I understood clearly what was on the other side.' Thus he went on chattering, having almost forgotten how we began to talk: to forget the things of the present day is ever a sign or proof of great age. 'Ah!' he sighed, heavily, 'would to God that I could find myself once more aboard a tight vessel on the Pacific Seas, with plenty of men and lemons, and some music for the lads in the evenings, and, for amusement, taking a ship now and then, and making the Spaniard walk the plank. Jack should be our Captain, and Bess should go with us—I could not go away from Deptford without Bess, and her heart is always set on Jack. Yet, I do not remember any women among the Rovers except Mary Read and Ann Bonny, and they dressed like men, and pretended to be men. They sailed under Captain Rackam, and a brave pair of wenches they were. I dreamed last night that we were all three on the poop of as fine a schooner as one

could wish, bound for the South Seas, by way of the Indian Ocean.'

So we lost our hero. At least so we thought we had lost him. He was taken to a French prison. He would never be so mad as to return to England, where certain death awaited him. We should never see him again. And, as Captain Petherick truly said, we were all ashamed by an act as truly cowardly as ever British sailor committed. The news-papers continued to speak of it; the evidence of Captain Boys was printed in full, and there were more epigrams. And then other things happened; and the loss of the 'Calypso' would have been speedily forgotten but for a surprising and unexpected turn, which was, so to speak, a second act in this tragedy of Jack Easter-brook's end.

Truly surprising and unexpected it was, and the intelligence of it threw us all into an agitation worse, if possible, than the first. For we were assured that the worst was over. The first blow fell upon us like a thunderbolt from

a clear sky, and now we were rising to our feet again (except the Admiral), stunned and confused, yet in a fair way of recovery, as happens in every earthly calamity, else 'twould be impossible to live. The child we love—nay, the woman we love—dies, yet behold the sun rises and sets, and presently the daily life goes on as before, and the loss is partly forgotten. Suppose, however, the woman was not dead, but came to life again, only to die with more cruel suffering and with shame!

What happened, in a word, was this.

The crew of the prize had orders to take the 'Calypso' to Brest, which was the nearest French port. They ordered their prisoners below to the quarters always designed for men in that unhappy position—namely, the forward portion of the cockpit, where they have to sit in gloom, lit only by one great ship's lantern all day and all night, save for such times as they are allowed on deck for fresh air, in gangs and small companies. When the Englishmen were driven below, and the prize crew appointed, the 'Malicieuse' parted company,

and the 'Calypso' was left to make her own way to Brest.

'On the second day,' we read in the 'London Post,' 'the prisoners rose, and became again masters of the ship, which was brought into Spithead under the First Lieutenant, the Captain being kept a prisoner in his cabin. This extraordinary reversal of fortune, and other circumstances attending the case, have excited the greatest interest. The Lords Commissioners have ordered the ship to be brought to Deptford, where the court-martial on Captain Easterbrook will be held.'

As is usual in news published by authority in the 'Gazette,' and copied by other newspapers, there were no particulars of the manner in which the ship was recovered, except that she was navigated by the First Lieutenant. Had the crew, then, mutinied against their Captain, and confined him to his cabin? If not, how was he a prisoner?

It was impossible for me, who knew the whole circumstances of the case, not to feel that in this surprising reversal of fortune and

in the ordering of the court-martial, there was a direct interposition of the hand of Providence, such as may well make the guilty tremble. To lose life, and honour as well, which is dearer than life, as a penalty for broken vows, seems a terrible punishment, and out of proportion to the offence. But it is not every inconstant lover who hath expressly called down upon his own head, as Jack did, the wrath of God in case of his inconstancy. Man cannot with impunity call upon the name of the Lord. There is a story of one who learned how to draw the lightnings out of Heaven, but he drew them upon himself, and so perished. Was not this the fate of Jack Easterbrook?

Alas! we were now wholly without hope. For needs must that he be tried; and he was condemned already, and as good as shot. While he was prisoner with the French, his life at least was safe; and if he chose never to return, he could certainly never be tried; and so his case would be in the course of time forgotten. But now he must be tried, and he must be condemned.

'But,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'he shall call me as a witness; and I will prove from books and from mine own experience that there have happened many cases of sudden madness, and that in such an access or seizure a man is not master of himself. And those who have travelled much in countries where the sun is hot, and especially those who have wandered, as the boy did, among savages, with insufficient food, and perhaps no covering for the head, are more than others liable to such fits—instances of which I can produce. It will also be set forth that the Captain, not long before he sailed, received so heavy a blow upon the head that he was carried senseless through the town and across the river. Such a blow may of itself produce the effect of sudden madness. Men who have proved themselves brave sailors and fond of fight do not, unless from this cause, suddenly become cowardly. Why, he crowded all sail to get within range of the enemy.'

'Yet he struck his flag,' I said. 'Is every man who runs away, after marching resolutely

to meet the enemy, to plead that he was smitten with a sudden madness?'

As for the value of such evidence, I know not what it would have availed, but I think it would have availed nothing in the eyes of the officers who formed the Court. But, as you will presently see, it never was produced. Perhaps the knowledge of what he could testify gave the Apothecary an inward assurance which comforted him. For he showed no alarm, and maintained stoutly that his own evidence, with the prisoner's previous good conduct, would get Jack acquitted, if it did not get him reinstated in command.

But Courts, whether martial or civil, do not thus examine into motives and causes. If a Judge were to hear why a pocket came to be picked, or by what train of circumstances an honest man has been turned into a rogue, there would be no punishment at all, but rather general commiseration for sin, and forgiveness of all sinners, on the score of human weakness and the strength of temptation.

As for Bess, when she heard that the

Captain was a prisoner and on his way to meet his trial, she said nothing, except that whatever happened the end was certain; and she waited. Her wrath and fierceness were all gone; she was now gentle and calm, though her cheek was pale, and round her eyes a black ring, by which I knew that she slept little and thought of Jack continually.

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW THE 'CALYPSO' CAME HOME AGAIN.

O! when we awoke in the morning, the 'Calypso' herself was lying in the river, moored nearly opposite to the mouth of the dock.

I made haste to the King's Yard, in order to hear the news, and there, as I expected, I found a little knot of gentlemen, including Captain Petherick, the chief officer of the Yard, and a few who, like myself, were brought thither by anxiety and curiosity. They were earnestly conversing with the First Lieutenant of the ship. He was a man whose hair was now grown completely grey (wherefore he no longer used powder), being some fifty-five years of age, but for want of interest never having got any higher. By birth he was a Scotchman;

he had, like many of his countrymen, a hard and strongly marked face, and his manner of speech was hard and slow, so that, though he had such a tale to tell as surely never was heard before, his manner of telling it never varied even in the most astonishing parts of his narrative, except that now and then he broke off to express his own opinion on the matter. We presently, however, discovered that he felt great commiseration for the unhappy fate of his Captain, young enough to be his son, and that he held much the same view as the townspeople—namely, that there must be witchcraft at the bottom of the affair. We learned also that the recapture of the ship would now present a very different complexion, being due, not as had been supposed, to a general rising of the crew, but to the most astonishing courage of the Captain himself, and the display of reckless daring in a singlehanded attack upon the prize crew, such as one had never read of or heard of before.

As regards the striking of the colours, there was nothing new in what we learned. The

Captain with his own hand did certainly haul down the flag without firing a shot. Against that damning and capital fact nothing could be said. But as for what followed, you shall hear the First Lieutenant's story.

'When the Captain struck his colours, which he did with his own hand, the men looking on in sheer amazement, I myself ran to him, crying, "For God's sake, Captain! for God's sake, Sir, consider what you do!" But the Captain drew his hanger and slashed at me, so that, though the flat of the sword only struck me, I fell senseless. Then, as I have since been told, those officers whose place was on deck stood back, terrified by the wild looks and furious gestures of the Captain. So great was the authority which he possessed, that not a man among them all dared so much as to murmur. Then the Frenchmen boarded us, and all, except the Captain, who was suffered to remain on deck, and myself, because I was senseless, were bundled below, and the hatches clapped down. When I presently recovered, I too was allowed to remain above. Now, for two nights and two

days, the Captain sat on the quarter-deck upon the trunnion of a carronade, his hat off, his hands upon his knees, his eyes blood-red, his face pale. Gentlemen,' cried the First Lieutenant, breaking off suddenly at this point, 'twould have moved a heart of stone only to look upon the Captain in this misery of shame. Despair was in his eyes as he turned them from the sea to the ship, and from the ship to the sea. As for what the men think, there is but one opinion: that it was the work of the Devil. He was bewitched, or possessed. I know not if we have the right to try a man for an act done under demoniac possession, which we know to be sometimes permitted. But the madness had now left him, and he was in his right mind again.'

There was not one of those present who heard this with a dry eye. But more moving things still were to follow.

'It was on the third day after the surrender,' the First Lieutenant told us, 'and in the forenoon, the usual guard being set, the French officers and sailors all armed, and their

Commander on the quarter-deck. In the waist was gathered together a small party of prisoners taking their spell of fresh air ; they were lolling in the sun, or looking over the bulwarks in the hope of discovering an English flag. Nothing was further from their thoughts than an attempt to recapture the "Calypso." On that point there could be no doubt. They talked with each other in low voices, being very much dejected at the position of their affairs, and the prospect of a French prison, and they looked at their Captain, who sat bareheaded on the quarter-deck. He, too, like themselves, was unarmed, and he sat without moving or making any sign of life.

'Suddenly he sprang to his feet and caught the French officer, a much smaller man than himself, by the throat, tore his sword from him, and cut him down. The two sentinels rushed upon him with their bayonets, but he lightly leapt aside, and cut them down too. Then, armed with the sword, he sprang into the waist, and crying, "Men of the 'Calypso,' to the rescue of your ship!" he attacked the Frenchmen,

cutting them down and driving all before him like a madman.

'There is a tall stout fellow aboard, one of our Marines. He was on deck at the time, and was the first who recovered presence of mind (the rest being clean taken aback by the suddenness of the thing). He seized a rammer and sprang to the side of the Captain, fighting with him and protecting him. Mark you, if it had not been for that brave fellow the Captain would have been killed a dozen times over—as I doubt not he wished to be, seeing the reckless way in which he attacked the enemy. Nay, I wonder that in spite of this help he was not killed, seeing that they fired their pistols in his very face, and thrust at him with bayonets, and cut at him with swords; but all in vain. A fine sight it was, and such as will never be witnessed again by any of us, to see this hero fighting the whole of the prize crew single-handed, save for the Marine, who seemed to have no other thought than to protect his Captain, and laid about him with his rammer as if it had been a quarterstaff.

'Well, gentlemen, you may be very sure it was not very long before the rest of the English sailors on deck joined in with a true British cheer, fighting with whatever weapons they could pick up—namely, one with a marlingspike, one with a hammer, one with his fist, one with a dead Frenchman's bayonet, and so on, until in a few minutes we had the satisfaction of driving our conquerors under hatches, calling up our crew, and running up the Union Jack. The Captain it was who hauled it up with his own hand. His face was black with powder, and streaked with blood, though he had not received a scratch; his hands were red with blood, and his sword streaming; on the deck lay a dozen dead and wounded, though some of them only stunned with the Marine's rammer. When the flag was up, the Captain saluted it, and called on his men to give three cheers, which they did with a will. After that he ordered a double ration of rum, and every man to his duty.

'Then he turned to me. "Mr. Macdonald," he said, "I would to God your Captain was

lying dead among those poor wretches," pointing to the slain. I told him to take courage, because it was by this act, and his alone, that the vessel was recaptured. Then he hesitated awhile, and fetched a sigh as if his heart was breaking.

'"Whose hand hauled down the flag?" he asked.

'I waited to hear what more he had to say.

'"Where is the man," he asked, "who fought beside me just now? I mean the man who interposed to save my life?"

'I called the man, who stepped forward and saluted.

'"So," said the Captain, "'tis my old friend. Sirrah, twice hast thou endeavoured to take my life, out of revenge. Once hast thou saved it. Thou hast thy revenge at last, and in full measure. Return to duty."

'I know not, gentlemen,' continued the First Lieutenant, 'what the Captain meant by those words, for the man saluted and stepped back to his place, making no reply, either by look or speech. Then the Captain gave me his last orders. "You will take the command of

this ship, Sir," he said. "You will enter in the Captain's log a full account of the circumstances connected with the surrender and the recapture of the 'Calypso.' Disguise nothing, Sir. Nothing must be omitted. Write that the Captain hauled down the flag. Write that the Captain cut down the First Lieutenant, who would have remonstrated. Write that there was not a single shot fired, and the enemy carried less weight of metal and a smaller crew."

'"With respect, Sir," I told him, "I shall also write that the Captain also retook the vessel single-handed."

'"Write further—that the Captain gave over the command to you, with instructions to take the ship to Spithead, the whereabouts of the Admiral not being known, there to report on what has happened, and to await the instructions of my Lords the Commissioners."

'Gentlemen,' the First Lieutenant concluded, 'I obeyed orders. I sailed to Spithead, and reported the circumstances of the case. The Commissioners have ordered me to bring the ship round to Deptford, the Captain aboard her, prisoner, waiting his court-martial.

We hope that, though he certainly struck the colours, his subsequent conduct may save his life. For most certainly he was mad when he did it, or bewitched, or possessed of a devil. But he is mad no longer. I forgot to say, gentlemen, that although for two days he refused to take anything, and I verily believe he intended to starve himself to death, he has since eaten and drunk heartily.'

This was the story as the First Lieutenant told it.

Now, when we heard it we were in a doubt what to do. For to neglect the unhappy prisoner altogether would seem heartless, whereas, to try and see him, unless he manifested a desire to see us, would seem like intrusion. He sat in his cabin, we heard, all day, and at night, when it was dark, walked upon the quarter-deck. He spoke with no one save the First Lieutenant, and made no reference to the approaching trial—the day for which they expected would be fixed very shortly.

First, however, my father wrote to him, and

asked if he would wish to see him; but received a letter thanking him, indeed, and putting off his visit until, the writer said, he should be forced to contemplate the near approach of Death. Next, Mr. Brinjes sent a message that he wished to see him as his physician (a title which he assumed when he pleased); but the Captain returned word that he had never been in better health.

As for myself, I waited for some days, not venturing to intrude upon his suffering, yet desirous of seeing him. At last I wrote a letter, begging him to tell me if I could do anything for him. To which he replied that he would take it kindly if I would come aboard and see him in his cabin. I obeyed with a sinking heart, for, indeed, what consolation could I administer, or with what countenance could I greet him, or could I pretend that he was not overwhelmed with shame?

When I went on board, I was astonished to find, acting as sentry at the top of the companion, no other than Aaron Fletcher. I knew not that he was on board the 'Calypso.'

Strange, indeed, that he should now be mounting guard as Marine over the man whom he had many times fought, and twice tried to murder. He made no sign of recognition as I passed him.

Jack was in his cabin, sitting at his window, leaning his head upon his hand, and gazing upon the river, with the crowd of craft upon it. He turned his head when I opened the door, and rose to meet me.

'Luke,' he said, 'canst take the hand of a coward wretch who hath surrendered his ship without a blow? Nay—nay—lad; tears will not help, and I am not worth a tear, or anything now but to be shot like a cur, and rolled up in a bit of sacking, and so tossed into the water, and forgotten.'

I asked after his health, but he put me off.

'Health?' he cried. 'What matters my health? If you can pick up a smallpox, or a galloping consumption, or a fever, and send it to me—the worse the complaint, the better I shall like it; or if Mr. Brinjes, who can cause all diseases, will send me one that will suddenly

tear out my heart, or stop my breath, it would be very much to the point at the present juncture. My health? Why, as the Devil will have it, it was never better.' He laughed. 'Go tell Mr. Brinjes, or his swivel-eyed assistant, to make me up a disease or two in that saucepan of his that is always on the hob. 'Tis a crafty old man, and first cousin, I verily believe, to the Devil.'

He paused awhile, thinking what next to tell me.

'Tell the Admiral . . . No, not yet; after my death thou shalt tell him all the truth, which I will tell thee directly. I cannot write to that good old man; yet, Luke, I must send him some message. Therefore: . . . but no, there are no words that I can send him. I cannot ask his forgiveness, because he can never forgive me. I cannot thank him for all his kindness, because I am not worthy now so much as to send a word of gratitude. Let be, let be. When I am dead thou shalt tell him the truth. As for Castilla, she must forget me. Tell her that, Luke. I am certain that she

will soon console herself. She never loved me as poor Bess used to love me. There is Mr. Brinjes—tell him—why, tell him that he must look for another sailor to steer his ship among the islands of the Southern Seas.'

'Jack,' I said, 'it is terrible.'

'Yes; it is terrible. It is very terrible, lad. But it must be endured. Trust me, that I shall not stand snivelling before the file of Marines at the end. That is, unless there be another——' Here he paused, and in his eyes there was apparent a look of such terror as I have never since seen in any man's eyes, while his cheeks turned white, and drops stood upon his brow. 'Unless,' he said again, 'there come another——' Here he broke off again. 'Luke,' he said, 'if at the end I die craven, know of a surety that I die unforgiven, and that my soul is lost. But it cannot be that death will not atone.' So he paced his cabin once or twice, and then, becoming more calm, he sat down again. 'Luke, dear lad, I wished to see thee, but only thee, for the present. I have much

to say. And first—of Bess. Do you know the words she said to me before I sailed?'

'I know them. Bess told me herself.'

'Does any other person know them?'

'No one, I believe.'

'Let her hold her tongue, then, lest they take her for a witch. Why, I know full well that she is no witch; and as for those words, they were spoken by her, but yet were not her own. I laughed when I heard them. The second time I heard them I laughed no longer. And now I will tell thee the whole truth, Luke; but keep it to thyself until I am dead, when I wish thee—nay, I charge thee—to tell the Admiral and thy father. I crowded all sail in pursuit of the enemy; I prepared for action with as light a heart as a man can have who has a stout ship and a lusty crew. My guns they were loaded, and my men were at quarters, every man stripped to the skin, a good ration of rum served round, and as hearty a spirit as ever animated a British crew. I was as certain of making a prize of the "Malicieuse" as I am now certain of being tried and sentenced to death.

Suddenly, we being by this time well within range, and our men prepared to give the enemy a broadside, a shot from the Frenchman struck our bow, and sent the splinters flying. Then there came upon me a kind of dizziness, and a voice shouted—yea, shouted in my ears—though none but me heard it. . . . "Thou shalt be struck where thou shalt feel the blow most deeply." I tell thee the truth, Luke. But tell no one, lest they seize poor Bess for a witch. Something—I know not what—caught my hand, and dragged me—whether I would or no—yea, compelled me—to the mainmast, and placed the halliards in my hand, and forced me to haul down the flag. I know not very well what happened afterwards; my men, I believe, were all smitten with stupid amazement, and made no resistance: how should they when the flag was struck? They tell me that I cut down the First Lieutenant. Thank God I did no more than stun him! And presently, when I came to myself, I was sitting on a carronade, and the ship was a prize, and the French Commander was on the quarter-deck.'

'But you recaptured the ship?'

'Why, 'twas a desperate attempt. I thought first that I would starve myself to death. But a man does not like to kill himself. And then, seeing the Frenchmen on the deck, and some of my lads for'ard under the sentries, I thought to make them kill me. Alas! they were not suffered to kill me. Some of my men were wounded, and a good many of the Frenchmen knocked o' the head; but I came out of the fight without a scratch, and the ship was ours again. That is my story, lad, in its truth.'

What could a man say in consolation to a man thus afflicted? Was there ever a worse case? My father, for his part, found the case of Job worse, 'because,' he said, 'not only did the Patriarch lose wife and children, and substance and health, but he also lost that which made the patriarchal life more desirable than any which hath followed it—namely, the daily walk with God, compared with which a man's reputation among his fellows is naught indeed.'

'Tell Bess,' Jack went on, 'what hath happened. Let her know that she is revenged,

and I am punished. She did not desire my punishment. It will grieve the poor, tender creature, who always loved me better than I deserved. Yet it is the punishment—nay, I know it now—it is the punishment of GOD Himself.'

He then told me, what indeed I knew already, the history of his passion for Bess, which was as brief as it was violent, sparing himself not at all.

'Never,' he swore, 'was a man more madly in love with any woman than I with Bess, and never, I am sure, did woman love man better than she loves me. I confess, lad, that I made her a thousand promises the most sacred I knew, even upon the Holy Bible, that I would never forget her, but would marry her when I returned. The man Brinjes was witness a dozen times to these protestations. As for him, he is, I think, a devil. For he egged her on to meet me as often as I wished in his own house; and he laughed when I swore constancy, telling me, when she was not present, that I knew the lesson as well as if I were five-and-thirty, instead

of four-and-twenty, and that every sailor was the same, but I the most fortunate of all, because I had so beautiful a girl. I meant not, however, Luke, to deceive her. I intended when I sailed away to keep my word. I was full of love to her. Yet, which is strange, when we had been at sea for two or three months, I thought of her no longer. When I came home with the prize I declare that I had clean forgotten her; and when I saw her, I looked upon her no longer with love, and wondered how I could ever have loved her.'

'Poor Bess!'

'It is strange, Luke, since I took the ship again, the image of the girl hath returned to my heart. I have thought upon her daily, and I remember once more all the things that passed between us while I was waiting for my appointment to the "Tartar." Poor Bess! She deserved a better lover. How could I ever forget her brave black eyes? See, Luke!' He drew up his sleeve and showed his left arm—he had forgotten when last he exhibited that tattoo.

'See, lad, her name is ever before me. Yes; a better lover she deserved.'

'She desires no better lover, Jack.'

'What?' he asked. 'Doth she not curse my very name?'

'Nay; she hath never cursed thee, Jack. She loves thee still: she hath always loved thee.'

'A woman cannot love a man who is disgraced.'

'Why? She loves the man: it is not his honour or his reputation she loves. That I have heard, but I have never understood it, concerning women, before; but now I perceive it very plainly. It is strange to us, because a man cannot love a woman without thinking of her beauty; and so we believe that a woman cannot love a man without thinking of his honour and reputation, his strength and his name. Jack, will you see this poor girl?—will you let her come to you?—and tell her kindly, in your old way, that you love again, as in the past time, and so heal her bleeding heart?'

'See her? Truly, I never thought,' said Jack, 'that she would any more come to me. I thought that she must be like Aaron Fletcher —only anxious to see me swing. Why, if the poor child can find any comfort or happiness in coming here, let her come, in God's name. As for me, dear lad, there is a load upon my heart which I thought would be with me till my death. But if she will forgive me, I think that load will be removed, and I can die with easier mind. Poor Bess! she will but get her lover in time to see him die. My heart bleeds for her! Go quick—bring her to me. Let me at least ask her forgiveness.'

You may be sure that I lost no time in taking this fond message to Bess.

I looked that she would burst into weeping and sobbing. But she did not.

'I knew,' she said, 'that I should get my lover back. Now care I for nothing more. For if he must die, so must I die also. Death itself shall not have power—no—death shall have no power to separate us. On the day that he dies shall I die too. He loves me again.

Why—do you think I care what may happen to either of us, since he loves me still?'

I led her on board, and took her to the Captain's cabin, but at the door I turned away, and so left them alone.

Oh! behind that closed door what prayers and vows were uttered! what tears were shed! what tender embraces were exchanged! when, in the presence of Shame and Death, those hapless lovers met again!

CHAPTER XLII.

OF THE COURT-MARTIAL.

NEARLY all that follows is matter of history, and may be read in the gazettes and papers of the day. Yet for the sake of completing the history, it shall be set forth in order.

The court-martial was appointed to be held on board the 'Calypso,' on the forenoon of Monday, February 2.

On that day it was accordingly held, the Hon. John Cheveril, Rear-Admiral of the White and Admiral of the Port, being the President. The Court consisted of Captains Richard Orde, Frederick Drake, Saltren Willett, Peter Denis, and Joshua Rowley. Captain Petherick should also have sat, but he begged to be excused, on the ground of personal friend-

ship with the defendant. He was present, however, and sat at the back of the court, with as sad a countenance as ever I beheld. (As for our Admiral, he was in his bedroom with an attack of the gout, which even Mr. Brinjes could not cure.) The court was thrown open to all. Few of the friends of the accused officer were present, but there was a great throng of people, not only from Deptford Town, but also from London. Truly, a court-martial on whose decision rests the honour, if not the life, of a man, is a species of judicial investigation which strikes awe upon the beholder, even more than the aspect of the judge, jury, and counsel in a civil court, the solemnity of the occasion being heightened and set off by the uniforms of the Judges and the naked weapons of the sentries and guards.

The Court was opened by the Deputy Judge-Advocate. He was only an attorney of Deptford, by name Richard Pendlebury, but he wore a black gown over his coat, and, being provided with a full wig, which might have been proper even to a serjeant-at-law, and wear-

ing much lace to his bosom and his sleeves, and being a big burly gentleman with a full round voice, he looked as full of authority as a King's Counsel. He began the proceedings by reading the warrant of the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, empowering the Admiral to assemble courts-martial. This done, the President ordered that Captain Easterbrook should be brought before the Court. My heart beat fast and my throat choked when he appeared, bearing himself proudly, but with pale cheek, dressed, if one may say so, like a bride for her wedding, wearing his best uniform, his richest lace, and white leather gloves. Never, surely, did officer of the King's Navy bear himself more gallantly. Once only I saw his cheek flush scarlet. 'Twas when, in the old familiar way, he clapped his hand to his side for the adjustment of his sword. Alas! he had no sword. That had been taken from him, and was now lying on the table before the President, the hilt towards the prisoner. Then he bowed to his judges and stood upright, and, to outward show, calm and

collected, though a tempest of shame and despair was raging within.

Then the Deputy Judge-Advocate administered the oath to the members of the Court and took it himself in the form prescribed, after which he read the charge against the defendant, as follows:

'Gentlemen,—The charge against Captain John Easterbrook, Commander of the "Calypso," here present before your honourable Court, is that on the 4th day of December, 1759, he did cowardly and treacherously surrender and yield up his ship to the enemy, and he is here to answer this charge accordingly.'

He then read the Fifteenth of the Articles of War, as follows:

'Every person in or belonging to the fleet who shall desert to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, or shall run away with any of His Majesty's ships or vessels of war, or any ordnance, ammunition, stores, or provision belonging thereto, to the weakening of the service, or shall yield up the same, cowardly or treacherously, to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, being

convicted of any such offence by the sentence of the court-martial, shall suffer death.'

These preliminaries being completed, the Deputy Judge-Advocate proceeded to call his witnesses, and to each in turn administered an oath which is more awful than that used in the civil courts, because it lays upon the witness an obligation to reveal everything that he knows concerning the case. The form is this:

'I, A. B., do most solemnly swear that in the evidence I shall give before the Court respecting the present trial I will, whether demanded of me by question or not, and whether favourable or unfavourable to the prisoner, declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, GOD!'

The deposition of the officers had already been taken at Portsmouth for the information of the Lords Commissioners, and in every case these were first read aloud, and then confirmed by the witness, who added what he chose, and answered such questions as were put to him. And in the putting of these questions it seemed to me as if the Deputy Judge-Advocate was

desirous of pressing and dwelling upon every fact which might make the crime appear blacker, and of concealing or passing over every fact which made in favour of the accused.

The first witness called was Lieutenant Colin Macdonald, First Lieutenant of the 'Calypso.'

His deposition was short, and was as follows:

'At daybreak on the morning of December the 4th, being then in company with the frigate "Resolute," Captain Boys, we sighted three ships, which we presently made out to be a squadron of three French frigates, apparently of about the same armament as ourselves. They bore away at sight of us, as not wishing to fight. Captain Easterbrook gave the word to crowd all sail and up hammocks, the wind being then fresh and nearly aft and the sea lively, but the ship sailing free and not lying down, so that all her ports could be opened and all her guns fired. We presently found that we gained upon the Frenchmen, and about noon we were nearly come up with the "Malicieuse," the slowest

of the three, the "Resolute" being then half a mile or so astern, and the other two French ships about as much ahead of us. We were by this time cleared for action, the men at their quarters, and everything reported in readiness, looking for nothing but a close engagement, and a pretty hot one, with the three ships. The Captain's plan, he told me, was to range alongside of the enemy, pour in his broadside, grapple, and board, thinking that the "Resolute" would do the like, and so we might capture the squadron. And this we could have done, having faster vessels than the enemy, and Captain Easterbrook being, as I take it, the smartest handler of a ship in the service, though so young a man. But the Frenchman was not disposed to allow of this, if he could help it. Therefore, he began to let fly with the stern-chasers, being, like most of his nation, amply provided with these helps to running away. His first shot knocked away part of our figure-head, the splinters flying about the deck; but no one harmed. Just then, to our utmost consternation, the Captain

turned pale, and ran to the mainmast, where, with his own hands, he began to lower the colours. I ran to him, crying, "Captain, for God's sake, consider what you are doing!" Whereupon he drew his sword, and cut me down over the head, but, fortunately, with the flat of the weapon only, else I had been a dead man. And I knew no more until the business was ended, and we were all prisoners.'

Being asked by the Deputy Judge-Advocate what preparations had been made for an engagement, he replied that nothing was omitted that is customary on such an occasion; that they had ample time during the chase, and that no ship ever went into action better prepared. Immediately on sighting the enemy the bo's'n and his mates piped to stow hammocks; the carpenter and his mates were ready with their mauls and plugs; the gunner and his quarter-gunners examined and reported on all the cannon. When the ship was within a mile of the enemy the drum beat to quarters. Then every man stripped to the waist, and repaired to his proper place; a ration of rum was served

out; the hatches were laid; the Marines were drawn up on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le; lastly, the guns were cast loose, the tompions withdrawn, and the guns loaded and run out at all the ports. In one word, there was no point omitted that a Commander who knows his business would neglect, and everything in such order as the most resolute captain could desire.

Being asked further, if the enemy's consorts showed an intention of taking part in the fight, the Lieutenant replied that he was not prepared to state positively, but he believed that one of them backed her sails, while the other appeared to be hauling her wind; but he repeated that it was the Captain's design to neglect these vessels while he took the 'Malicieuse' by boarding, and afterwards to engage her consorts with the help of the 'Resolute.'

Being further pressed upon the distance of the 'Calypso' from the 'Malicieuse' when the Captain surrendered, he replied that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the 'Calypso' was no more than a hundred and fifty yards astern

of the 'Malicieuse,' and gaining rapidly. Being asked what was the posture of the enemy so far as could be discerned, he replied the men were at quarters, and ready for action, but that all sail was crowded, and that the Frenchman, it was quite certain, had no stomach for the fight, and would gladly have got clear off.

At this point of the evidence, Captain Easterbrook was asked if he had any questions to put to the witness. He replied that he had none, and that to the best of his knowledge the evidence given by Lieutenant Macdonald was true in every particular—a statement which made the Court look serious, and troubled the mind of the Deputy Judge-Advocate, because there is nothing which these gentlemen desire more than to fight a stubborn case; whereas, if an officer pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the mercy of the Court, he has no chance to show his cleverness.

'With permission of the Court,' said the First Lieutenant, 'I will now give evidence as to the recapture of the ship.'

'I submit to the Court,' said the Deputy

Judge-Advocate, 'that the recapture of the ship has nothing to do with the charge against Captain Easterbrook—namely, that he did cowardly and treacherously yield up his vessel.'

'Gentlemen,' said the Lieutenant, 'with respect. If the ship had not been recaptured the Court could not have been held. And if it had not been for the Captain the ship would never have been recaptured. For he did a thing which I venture to maintain no other man in the service would have done, when he engaged, single-handed, the whole of the crew in charge of the prize.'

So the Court conferred together, whispering, and the President ordered the witness to proceed. Whereupon the Deputy Judge-Advocate sat down and put his hands in his pockets, and gazed upwards as if this part of the evidence did not concern him.

The account which the Lieutenant gave of the retaking of the ship was exactly the same which he had already given to the Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick. It need not, therefore, be repeated here. Suffice it to

say that at the recital there was not a face in court which was not suffused with emotion, and as for myself, I thought that surely after so gallant an exploit his sword would be returned to him.

'Gentlemen,' concluded the First Lieutenant, ''twas the most gallant deed I have ever witnessed. Only by a miracle, and by his own valour did the Captain escape death. There were on deck thirty Frenchmen, all armed, and he with nothing but the sword which he tore from the French Commander. And to back him only a dozen unarmed men, who, to tell the truth, for I was among them, were taken by surprise, and would never have plucked up heart save for the example of the Captain. The first man to join him was a Marine, named Aaron Fletcher, who seized a rammer, and, armed with this weapon alone, stood by the Captain, playing a man's part, indeed; but for him, the Captain would have been cut down a dozen times. But, gentlemen, that the ship was recaptured is due to nobody but to the desperate valour of the Captain himself.'

The Court asked Captain Easterbrook whether he had any questions to put on this head, but he had none. Wherefore, Lieutenant Macdonald stepped aside, and made way for the next witness.

Then the Second Lieutenant of the ship was called, and he gave evidence that he was at his station on the main deck when the action began, and testified to the disgust of the men when they learned that the ship was surrendered. This was the more astonishing to them, as their Captain had the reputation of uncommon courage. At first the men refused to believe that the vessel was surrendered, and called upon each other to fight it out.

The Third Lieutenant gave similar evidence, adding that, had not the men been fully convinced of the Captain's bravery and judgment, there would have been a mutiny on board; and that they thought the ship must be sinking at least, or dangerously on fire, or that it was some stratagem, counterfeit, or design by which the Captain thought to fool the enemy, and that they looked at each other and laughed

aloud, waiting for the word to lay the guns, and fire. Further, that the enemy did not believe it possible that a British ship should thus cowardly be yielded up, and continued to fire upon the 'Calypso,' the shot passing through the rigging and the sails, but doing no further mischief. Nor did the men believe that the ship was surrendered until the French boat came alongside and the Captain gave the word to back the sails and lay down arms, which they all did with a very bad grace, yet still persuaded that something fatal had happened to the ship, and that the colours were struck to save their lives.

The Lieutenant of Marines deposed that his men were drawn up in readiness on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le, and stated plainly that he had no doubt of the issue, because the Frenchmen had only one thought—namely, to get away; and, in his opinion, it had been the Captain's intention to attack and take all three ships, with the help of the 'Resolute'; and that nothing in the world had ever surprised him more than the strange behaviour of the

Captain, from whom so much had been expected.

Captain Easterbrook declined to ask any questions of these witnesses. Was he, then, going to make no attempt at a defence?

They called the Purser, who put in the Captain's log-book, which is always done on these trials, I am told, but I know not why. And then I thought we should surely proceed to the defence, because there could be no doubt of the main fact—namely, that the Captain had certainly struck the colours.

But they delayed the case in order to call the Master, who confirmed the First Lieutenant's evidence as to the preparations for engaging the enemy; and the Gunner, who also confirmed the evidence; and the bo's'n and the carpenter, who added little to the evidence already before the Court, except the fact that when the men were under hatches and knew what had been done, the swearing and cursing of the crew were strong enough to lift the decks.

'Gentlemen,' said the Deputy Judge-Advo-

cate, 'there is no other evidence before the Court.'

'Stay,' said the President, 'call the Marine of whose conduct in the recapture of the ship Lieutenant Macdonald hath spoken.'

So they called Aaron Fletcher.

When this witness stepped forward, looking, it must be confessed, a much smarter and finer man in his scarlet coat than he ever looked as a landsman, Jack's face flushed. It was his fate never to be out of reach of this man's animosity. Twice had Aaron tried to take his life, when that was most worth having. Once he had saved his life when he himself had most ardently desired to lose it. Now he was present to give evidence in the hour of his open humiliation.

'I thought,' he told me afterwards, 'that I had drained the whole cup. But the bitterest drop was when that man stood before me, as if Bess, poor girl! had not yet forgiven me, and had sent her old lover to gloat over my discomfiture. She hath forgiven me, however; therefore I need not have been troubled.'

The Court ordered the man to be sworn, and bade him relate all that he knew concerning the affair, and particularly as to the retaking of the ship from the French.

'I was on the fo'ks'le,' said Aaron, speaking boldly, and no whit abashed at the solemnity of the Court and the rank of the Judges. 'I was on the fo'ks'le, with the rest of the company drawn up and armed, the muskets being loaded and inspected, waiting for the word to fire, which would have been in a few minutes, as we expected. Then a shot from the enemy struck our bows and the wood went flying; but no one, that I could see, was hurt. And then I saw the Captain strike the flag and cut down the First Lieutenant. "Mates," I whispered presently, "either the ship is sinking, or the Captain has lost his stomach for the fight. If she sinks, we go to Davy's Locker; if he's played the coward, he will swing."' As he said these words, he turned his face to Jack with a look of triumph in his eyes. 'We were all sent down below,' he continued, 'when the Frenchmen came aboard, and there we stayed

with no arms and short rations. Two days afterwards I was on deck, taking my spell of fresh air with the others—about a dozen men in all. We were leaning against the bulwarks, wishing the job was over, and cursing the Captain, who was sitting on the quarter-deck on the trunnions of a carronade, his hands on his knees, staring straight before him as if he saw the rope dangling before his eyes, already noosed for him. Suddenly I saw him spring from his place and catch the French officer, who was walking the deck, by the throat, and shake him like a dog. Then he threw him on the deck (where the Frenchman lay stunned and half-dead) and he tore his sword from him; then he rushed upon one of the sentries and cut him down, and attacked the other: some of the Frenchmen, seeing what was done, cried out in their own lingo, and ran aft, some firing pistols and some drawing cutlasses. Whereupon I called out to my mates and seized a rammer, which was the best thing for a weapon I could come at, and ran after them, and so to the Captain's side, for I plainly saw that his

design was to kill as many of the Frenchmen as he could, and to be killed himself, which I resolved to prevent if I could. And then the other Englishmen joined me, and in a very few minutes we had half of the prize crew killed or wounded, and the other half crying for quarter; but the Captain was so furious that for some time he would give none, throwing himself upon all such as had weapons and would fight. Hard work I had to save him. But I did. When 'twas all over there wasn't a scratch upon him. I saved him, your Honours. With a rammer I saved his life.'

'Your courage,' said the President, 'does you credit. I shall take care that it is duly represented to the Colonel of your regiment; and if your conduct is reported as equal to your gallantry, you will not go without your reward. The Captain, you think, sought for death?'

'No one,' said Aaron, 'who did not want to be killed could have behaved as he did. Before the enemy called for quarter, we had driven them together in the waist, where they

were shouting and threatening to charge us with pikes and bayonets, but we had weapons by this time, and were ready to receive them. But they did not charge, because the Captain leaped into the middle of them with nothing but his sword in his hand, laying about him like a madman. He was sober and in his senses when he cowardly hauled down the flag, but he was now, when he attacked the prize crew, gone stark mad. If he hadn't been mad and not known what he was about, we should never have taken the ship.'

'And you leaped after him?' asked one of the Court.

'I had my rammer, which was almost as good as a quarterstaff; and I'd rather have a quarterstaff than a sword any day, or a pike either, if there's room for play.'

'And this you did out of devotion or loyalty to your Captain?' asked the President, astonished at the man's coolness, and the deliberation with which he gave his evidence.

'Nay, nay,' he replied, grinning again, 'I saved his life because I should have been sorry

to see him die like a brave man. All I wanted was to see him swing, your Honours, for striking his colours.'

These words produced a sensation in the court; and all eyes were turned upon this witness who (though but a simple Marine) carried devotion to his country's honour unto so great a height. But the officers of the 'Calypso' whispered together, and I heard such words passed from one to the other as 'rascal,' 'six dozen,' 'the first chance,' 'not good enough for him,' and so forth, from which I conjectured that Aaron would find a warm welcome if he went to sea again on board this vessel. I think he must have heard the whispers, but he cared nothing for them. He was now enjoying a revenge sweeter far than to have murdered the Captain with his own hand.

Therefore, he turned his ugly face to the prisoner, and grinned with the satisfaction of his ignoble triumph. The Court, however, seemed to take the words for an outburst of honest and patriotic feeling which did credit to this rough and simple fellow.

Captain Easterbrook refused to ask any questions of this witness either. It was now between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, when the President asked the prisoner if he designed to call any witnesses for the defence, and proposed to adjourn the Court until the following day.

'Sir,' said Jack, 'I have no witnesses to call.'

'Then,' said the President, 'you would doubtless wish for time to prepare your defence. It is now late; we will adjourn the Court until to-morrow.'

'Sir,' said Jack, 'I thank you. But, with permission of the Court, I will make my defence without further delay. I will not trouble the Court to adjourn.'

The Court conferred, and presently said that they would hear the prisoner at once, if he chose.

'Gentlemen,' Jack began, 'I have but a few words to say; and as for defence, I have none. I have been at sea since my thirteenth year, and am now four-and-twenty. During

this time I have been present in many actions, and I have never received aught but commendation from my superior officers. I served first under Captain Holmes, of the "Lenox," and next on board the "Countess of Dorset," when I was cast away on the coast of Patagonia, and, after wandering among the Indians, I was prisoner first to the Spaniards, and afterwards to the French. But I broke prison, and was appointed Third Lieutenant to Captain Lockhart, of the "Tartar." I submit that my character for courage was never impugned on board any of these vessels, and Captain Lockhart hath thought fit to bear testimony in his despatches to my conduct in the many engagements fought by his ship. You have also heard how I was enabled, by the help of those of my crew then on deck, to take the ship again.'

He paused here, as if he was unwilling to say what was in his mind.

'I submit to the Court,' said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, 'that these facts, which I think the Court will not dispute, do not constitute any defence.'

'They are no defence,' Jack replied. 'I state them because they form my only consolation in this hour. I have no defence. The charge is true. My officers and crew would have taken, not only the "Malicieuse" but the two other ships as well. Their evidence is true in every particular. I wish to testify that no Commander ever had better officers, a handier vessel, or a heartier crew. I threw all away. I struck the colours. I cowardly and treacherously surrendered my ship without firing a shot. I have but one prayer to make of the Court. It is that this act, which was wholly my own, may not in the least degree prejudice the future of my brave Lieutenants. It was this shameful hand, and none other, which hauled down the flag of the "Calypso."'

When he concluded, there was silence for a space, because the Court and everybody present were taken by surprise, and because the contemplation of this tall and handsome lad (he seemed no more) thus avowing, not proudly, but shamefully, and yet honestly and fully, his own dishonour, overwhelmed us with

sadness. From his officers, standing together, there were whispers, which could be heard all over the court: 'He was mad. A madman is not answerable for his doings. No one but a madman would have done it.' And so forth. And I verily believe, and have been assured, that there was not one among them all who would not gladly have put out to sea again under Captain Easterbrook, in full confidence that he would fight the ship as long as a man was left alive to stand beside him.

As for me, I had looked to see him call some witnesses. He could not, it is true, call Bess Westmoreland; nor could he tell the whole truth, else he would have stood before the Court and said, 'Gentlemen, this is none other than the Hand of GOD which hath struck me for my sins, and because I broke my solemn oath, passed to a woman. *The Hand hath struck me in that way which most deeply and most bitterly I should feel.* For I never feared to die, nor to be wounded, but always and before all things have I loved and prized honour and been jealous for my good name,

and longed to distinguish myself and to rise in the service. Wherefore, now have I been deprived of the thing which most of all I prized, and stand before you all, bereft of honour, a *cowardly* Commander, so that there remains for me nothing but death; and whether I am hanged or shot, I care not, so that I may die soon. For there is no place where I could live whither my shame would not also follow me and be quickly brazened forth to all the folk. Sentence me, therefore, quickly, and let me go.'

This, I say, he felt and knew to be the truth. Yet he would not say it. But he might have called Mr. Brinjes, who would have testified, which is the truth, though it did not perhaps touch the case, that men who have been in places where the sun is hot, especially such as have wandered about without any covering for their heads, are often subject to sudden fits of madness, during which they know not what they do; and that perhaps this was the case with Captain Easterbrook. Nay, I have heard learned physicians, disputing on such points,

argue that sudden fits of madness are often produced by exposure to the hot sun; so that a man who hath once received a sun-stroke, as they call it, may, in such an access, commit murder or any other crime, and not know afterwards what he hath done.

The case being then concluded and the whole evidence completed, with such defence as the defendant had thought fit to set up, order was given to clear the court, which was done, the guard of Marines taking the Captain back to his cabin, and the Judges being left alone.

'He will die,' said Captain Petherick; 'I see in his eyes that there is nothing left for him to desire but death. The day of his execution will be welcome to him. Yet I hope that they will not hang him like a cur, but will shoot him like a brave man.'

'He was certainly mad,' said Mr. Shelvocke. 'I remember once, being then off the Ladrone Islands——'

'Ay,' said Mr. Brinjes, interrupting—I had not seen him in court; yet he was there,

dressed as if for the Club—'Ay. The boy was mad. What? Would a coward have resolved upon so desperate an enterprise as to attack the prize crew single-handed? Death was before him—death if he failed; death if he succeeded; for to succeed was but to throw himself into a court-martial. Whereas, if he had suffered the ship to sail into Brest Harbour, he might have lived in France all his life in safety, and no one to know what had happened. Now, what can they do but sentence him to be hanged or shot? Luke, my lad, if I had Aaron ashore, I would make everyone of his teeth like a lump of red-hot iron; rheumatic pains should grind his joints and twist his nerves; gout should tear and rend his stomach; tic should stick sharp needles into his face. Well—patience! something will happen unto Aaron yet. If, now, the poor boy had been suffered to have his wish, he would have died in the moment of victory, when he had reconquered the ship. As for witchcraft'—here he whispered—'but that I know the poor wretch loves him still, and would rather die than suffer him to come

to any harm, I should believe that Bess was at the bottom of the mischief. I say not that she is a witch; but no one knows what a revengeful woman can do when once she dabbles in the forbidden art.'

Bess was, indeed, at the bottom of the mischief, but in a way which Mr. Brinjes could not understand; for he had not, so far as I could discover, the fear of the Lord before his eyes, and was, indeed, little better than a Pagan.

'There is again,' he said, 'the old black woman. But, then, Jack was to marry her mistress, and therefore she would not harm him. Yet there must be a girl in it, and she must have put Obi upon him by the help of some, though I knew not that there were any other Obeah men in this country, besides myself. If I were younger, I would go to Portsmouth and find that woman, and then, Luke, my lad, she should be made to feel as if it had been better for her never to have been born.'

'Bess, at least, is no witch,' I said, for the fire of his one eye was so bright that I feared

he might have fallen upon her, or, at least, compelled her to tell him the truth.

'This woman, whoever she may be, hath robbed the King's service of the most gallant officer. She hath deprived a lovely woman of her sweetheart; she hath covered us all with shame and confusion. Wherefore, may her flesh fall rotten from her bones! May——'

'Nay, Mr. Brinjes,' I said, 'when you find her you can curse her. Let not your curses loose upon an unknown woman.'

He stopped because at this moment a messenger came forth from the court, and word passed that the armourer was sent for, and my heart sank like lead, and the women began to sob. It was too true. That petty officer presently came on deck and was passed within the court. And we heard the noise of his file. Alas! he was filing Jack's sword, and the end was now certain. To me the filing of the sword was like the cutting of the life-threads at once by the Fates, because—ah! Bess—Bess! how couldst thou survive thy lover?

Then the court was thrown open and the

prisoner was taken back to hear his sentence. We learned afterwards that there was a difference of opinion among the Judges, some inclining to mercy on the ground of the Captain's conduct in recapturing the ship. But in the end the sterner counsels prevailed; and, indeed, the commander of a ship can on no grounds be pardoned for surrendering to the enemy save in extremity. Suppose a man commits a forgery, is it any defence that before and after this act of wickedness he led a good and virtuous life? Suppose a boy picks a pocket, is it any defence that he is sorry, and would fain give back the purse and the money that was in it?

We went back to the court. Alas! If there had been any room for doubt before, there was none now, because the prisoner's sword was reversed, and lay upon the table the point towards the prisoner, which meant Death.

'Guilty,' whispered Mr. Brinjes, not looking at the sword. 'Death is written in their faces.' It was. And yet the brave officers who had

already passed and signed the sentence of death, showed compassion in their faces.

As for me, I cannot even now, after nearly forty years have passed, think of that moment without the tears rising to my eyes. The court was crowded with fine ladies, who had come from London to see the trial. They thought, perhaps, to enjoy the spectacle of a gallant man brought to shame, but they could not without tears and sobbing look upon this poor fellow, tall and manly, brought forth to hear a sentence of death.

The President arose, and read the sentence in his hand, signed by every member of the Court.

'Captain John Easterbrook, the court-martial duly held upon you for the loss of His Majesty's ship the "Calypso," find that you did cowardly surrender your ship. The sentence of the Court is that on a day to be presently appointed, according to the will of His Gracious Majesty the King, you be placed upon the quarter-deck of the "Calypso" and be there shot to death. God save the King!'

Now, before he spoke the last words, he laid down the paper and took Jack's sword in his hands, which he held for a moment as if loth to complete the sentence. Then, with the words, 'God save the King,' he broke the sword—filed in readiness by the armourer—across his knee and threw the broken pieces upon the table. And the women shrieked and the men groaned, and the officers who composed the Court hung their heads as if they dare not face the prisoner. And yet their sentence was most just and righteous.

'Gentlemen,' said Jack, in a clear firm voice, 'I thank the Court for their patient hearing of the case. I looked for no other verdict, and I desire no other. I acknowledge the justice of the sentence. God save the King!'

CHAPTER XLIII.

AFTER THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THUS ended the court-martial; thus was made grievous shipwreck of a gallant youth's ambition, his honour, and his life; yet, as to his honour, 'twas stoutly and steadfastly maintained by all sailors, and especially by the officers and men of the 'Calypso,' that the Captain's surrender (being done in a moment of madness or by power of witchcraft) was fully atoned for by his surprising recapture of the ship. That, too, has always been the opinion of his friends, though, for my own part, as the only one left who knows the whole truth, I cannot but acknowledge that the madness was sent by Heaven, just as much as that madness which the ancients feigned to have been inflicted on

the Greek hero who slew cattle and sheep, thinking they were his enemies. Therefore, no atonement for his deed was necessary, seeing that it was itself a punishment inflicted by the hand of a justly offended Creator.

I know not who told the truth to the Admiral, but perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes, who went daily to see him on account of an attack of gout, brought on partly by his distress of mind and the shame of this untoward event, and partly by the fault of the poor old gentleman himself, who tried to drown care with port wine and punch. This attack obstinately resisted the Apothecary's remedies. Indeed, though for the time he presently recovered, yet he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and never held up his head again, going in great heaviness, and, I fear, still taking more drink than is good for any man, until the disease mounted to his stomach, where, Mr. Brinjes being no longer at hand to assuage the pain, it speedily made an end of him.

On the evening of the court-martial the

gentlemen of the Club met as usual, though without their President. The conversation was enlivened, if one may say so, by the extraordinary and tragical incidents of the day. They drank not less, but rather more, in order to sustain their spirits; they took their liquor with whispers, and lowered voice, as is done in a house where one lies dead; and they naturally talked much on subjects akin to what was in their thoughts, as if seeking consolation in recalling examples resembling the case which so much touched their hearts. Thus King Richard the Second is represented by Shakespeare as loving, when in captivity, to talk of the violent deaths of Princes.

'I was present,' said Captain Petherick, 'at the execution of Admiral Byng, two years and a half ago. If family influence could have availed, he would have been spared. Yet he was shot, and went to his death with a smiling countenance.'

'I remember,' said Mr. Shelvocke—but I know not whether this was true—'the death of Captain Kirkby and Captain Wade for cowardly

deserting Admiral Benbow, and that was fifty-seven years ago.'

Another recalled the well-known case of Lieutenant Baker Philips, shot in 1745, for surrendering the 'Anglesea' to the 'Apollon,' after the Captain and the First Lieutenant were both killed. No mercy was shown to him, though it was proved that he had but 200 men and forty guns (and of his crew fifty killed and wounded), against the French crew of 500 men with fifty guns. Yet they shot him at Spithead on board the 'Princess Royal.' As for other courts-martial, Captain Fox, of the 'Kent,' was dismissed his ship for neglect of duty in 1747. In 1744 Admiral Mathers and four Captains were cashiered for neglect of duty. In the same year the Master of the 'Northumberland,' the Captain being mortally wounded, surrendered the ship before the Lieutenant could get on deck. Wherefore, he was sentenced to be confined in the Marshalsea for the remainder of his life. 'And there, gentlemen,' said Mr. Underhill, 'he lies to this day, and but last Monday se'nnight I saw him, and conversed

with him—a poor broken man, who vainly prays for death.'

In short, the talk ran wholly upon trials and executions; the unhappy young man now lying under sentence of death was, so to speak, executed beforehand and in imagination by his friends, who stood (for him) upon the quarter-deck, eyes bandaged, arms folded, before the file of Marines, and hoped (for him) nothing more than a happy shot through heart or head, which should put an instant stop to life. Then the conversation turned upon the various methods of violent deaths, all of which seem to be accompanied by great, and some by prolonged, agonies—such as breaking on the wheel, the punishment of the knout, or burning alive—and there was much discussion as to which method of violent death seemed the most preferable.

It was remarkable that Mr. Brinjes, generally one who talked more than any, for the most part sat apart during this gloomy talk, taking his pipe of tobacco without much share in the conversation, whether from excess of

grief or from the callous disposition of old age, to which most things seem to matter little. But he muttered to himself, as old people use, without heed to those who are about them, and I overheard him.

'Ay . . . ay . . .' he said, 'the boy must be shot, I suppose, and then Bess will not live. . . . She will certainly live no longer when he is gone. So have I lost both. She will go drown herself as soon as the shots are fired. But he is not dead yet—while there is life there is hope—who knows what may happen? 'Twill be three, and perhaps six weeks before the day of execution. Much may be done in six weeks. The lad is not shot yet, nor is Bess drowned. And as for Aaron—but he saved the Captain's life. Wherefore, though he did it with an ill design, I harm him not.' Presently he recovered his spirits, and looked about him, and began to talk in a more cheerful strain, though how he could put on a show of cheerfulness, with the prospect before him of Jack's certain execution and Bess's self-murder, passes understanding. 'The lad is not shot yet!' he

said. Why, what could be done for him? Nothing. A reprieve was past praying for. Yet it must be acknowledged that the popular indignation, which had at first ran high against the Captain who thus cowardly surrendered, quickly subsided and changed into compassion when the circumstances of the recapture became known, so that perhaps a reprieve might not have been so impossible had there been any in high place to ask for it.

As regards the condemned man, whom I saw many times after the sentence, I declare that I have never known any man more cheerful and resigned to his fate than was this most unfortunate Captain during the three weeks which passed between his sentence and the day of his execution. Of hope, he had none; nor did he desire to live.

'If I were reprieved,' he said, 'whither should I go? how live? I am but twenty-four years of age, and I might live for fifty years to come, even into the next century, if the world endure so long, with the accursed remembrance of one day always in my mind, and among

people who would never tire of pointing at the Captain who surrendered his ship without striking a blow—one single blow—the most cowardly surrender in the history of the British Navy. Why, 'twould be every day a thousand times worse than the pains of death. My worst enemy could devise no more cruel punishment than to send me forth free to walk the streets of an English town. Nay, Bess'—for she was with him—'tis idle to talk. I know what thou wouldst say, dear girl. For a mad act—we know, my dear, why that madness was sent, and for what cause permitted—no man should be held responsible. Why, my First Lieutenant was here yesterday, and said as much. But even he does not know, and the world can never know, the whole truth.'

In those last days Bess was with him always. She came at eight in the morning, and she left him at eight in the evening. Everybody knew by this time that she was the Captain's sweetheart; no one found it strange or wonderful, because Bess was the finest woman in Deptford, and the Captain was the

comeliest man; and people only sometimes remembered that he had been reported as promised to the daughter of the Admiral. It astonished me, perhaps because I daily expected and feared it, that no one so much as hinted at the possibility of Bess being engaged in witchcraft, though all were agreed that by foul practices the Captain had been deprived for the moment of his courage. It is no longer the custom to burn witches; yet I am sure that if any woman had been discovered, or even suspected, by the good people of Deptford, to have been concerned in this wickedness, she would have suffered every torture they could have devised. Burning—mere burning—would have seemed too mild a punishment for a woman who could thus by her villainous sorceries turn a brave man into a coward. Again, if things had gone well with this poor girl, if Jack had returned home triumphant and victorious, and had then openly sought his humble sweetheart, there were plenty of women who would have said hard and cruel things concerning her, as is their way with

each other. But now, when her lover lay under sentence of death, they refrained their tongues; nay, they even said good things of her, reckoning it to her credit that, for the sake of the Captain, she would receive the addresses of no other man, and that she sent Aaron Fletcher about his business and consorted with none of her former friends (who were beneath the notice of a Captain's lady), and sought in the society of Mr. Brinjes to acquire the manners and the bearing of a gentlewoman. When she went down to the Stairs in the morning, those women whom she passed on her way stood aside for her in silence, and looked after her with compassion in their eyes, and even with tears; and those, perhaps, the rudest women of the place, fit companions for the rudest sailors, abandoned in morals, sodden with drink, foul of tongue, and ever ready to strike and to swear. So that pity may find a home in the most savage breast.

She sat with Jack, therefore, all day long, in the cabin, which was his condemned cell. For the first day or two she wept continually.

Then she ceased her crying altogether, and sat with dry eyes. She said nothing, but she looked upon her sweetheart always, as if hungering after the sight of his dear face. But from time to time she rose and flung out her arms, as if she could not bear herself. This was natural, when a woman regains her lover only to lose him by a violent death. One evening I walked home with her through the town, and she told me, poor girl! what was in her mind. 'I shall not live after him,' she said; 'of that I am resolved. Why, if it be as he says, that Heaven hath punished him for his inconstancy, was it not through my mouth that the punishment was pronounced? Where he goes, I shall go. When he dies, I shall die. In that same hour when the bullets tear his dear heart, shall I die too; and so my soul shall join his. I know not,' she said, wildly, 'oh! I know not whither we shall be sent in the next world; and I care nothing—no, nothing—so only that we go there together. I am quite sure that he is forgiven all his sins, if ever he committed any,

though I know not that they can be worth considering. And he dies for them. What can a man do more? As for me, I am not afraid, because I have always gone to church every Sunday morning. Oh! I doubt not we shall go to Heaven together, and sit hand-in-hand, and side-by-side; and perhaps we shall forget the past, somehow, and then the old brave look will come back to my boy's eyes. What would Heaven be to him if I were not with him—and what to me if my Jack were not beside me? And oh! Luke, he loves me now more tenderly than ever he loved me before. And I am happy, though I know that we have but a day or two more to live. They tell me that to be shot gives no pain. Else I could not bear it, and must die first.'

I pointed out to her the wickedness of self-destruction; but she would not listen, crying wildly that she cared for no wickedness —not she—so that she could join in death, as well in life, the man she loved. Surely there never was woman who loved man with so violent a passion; and now in these last days,

when it was all too late, there never was girl more truly loved.

'Tis the fondest heart, Luke!' said Jack, the tears in his eyes. 'Why, for thy sake, sweet Bess, I would be almost contented to live, and to forget the past, if we could go somewhere together, where no man knew or could find out my dishonour—if we could go and live on one of the islands in the Southern Seas—— But this is idle talk.'

Then the time drew near when the sentence must be carried out. We expected from day to day to hear that the time was fixed.

About a fortnight after the sentence, a sudden and most surprising change came over Bess. She left off crying altogether; sometimes, even, she laughed; she seemed not to know, or even to care, what she said or did. She would throw herself into Jack's arms, and kiss him passionately; at the next moment she would tear herself free, and stand gasping and panting, and with wild eyes, as if with impatience, so that I feared lest she should lose her reason altogether. I have heard that

persons condemned to the flames by the accursed Inquisition (which they dare to call holy) have been known to go mad with the terror of looking forward to that awful torture. Sure I am that no flames of the stake could be more dreadful to Bess than the thought of the moment when her lover would fall dead, pierced by a dozen bullets. Jack at such times would try to calm her, but she shook him off, crying, 'No—no. Let me be. Oh! I am choking. Oh! Jack—my dear—if you knew what is in my heart! Yes—Jack. I will be quiet. Oh! what a wretch am I that I should add to your trouble at such a time!' Then she threw herself at his feet and caught his hands. 'Jack,' she cried, 'you know that I am your servant and your slave. Oh! if I loved you when all the world spoke well of you, think how much more I love you now you have got no one—oh! no one but your poor fond girl!'

He raised her and kissed her. Nothing now could move him but the sight of her tears and suffering, which (I am not ashamed to

write this down) brought tears to my own eyes.

'Let us pretend,' she said, 'let us talk like children—oh! we were once happy children, and we could pretend and believe what we please. Why . . . all this is only pretence. The cabin is our old summer-house; you are only twelve years of age, and I am a little girl; and we have been playing at court-martial. . . . No,' she shuddered, 'that is a dreadful game. We will play at something else. We are going away—you and I together, Jack—we shall take a ship and sail far away from England to the islands you have seen, and Mr. Brinjes talks about—we will live there—oh! no one will ever find us out. . . . We have long to live. I will work for you, and you will forget all that has happened. Then we shall grow old. . . . Do you think you would love an old woman, Jack, who had lost her beauty, and gone grey and toothless? And then we would lie down and die together. Why—whatever happens, we will die together—we must die together. Jack . . .

Jack. . . . Oh! if we could go away; oh! if we could go away together—to leave it all behind, and to forget it!'

'Patience, dear heart,' he said. 'Patience, Bess; it tears me to see thee suffer.'

I was with them; and—but who could see and listen to him without tears? I am not a stock or stone.

'Patience?' she replied. 'Yes, yes! I will have patience! Jack, do you remember three years ago, the day we were in the summer-house, Luke being present, you solemnly made a great promise?'

'I remember, Bess. God knows I have reason to remember, not only the promise but how I kept it.'

'Make me one more promise, Jack.' She laid her hands upon his arm. 'Make me one more promise now. Luke is here again to witness for us.'

'Why, child, what promise can I make thee now? A dying man can neither make nor break a promise. Shall I promise to love thee in the next world?'

'Nay, promise what I shall tell thee. Say, after me: I, Jack Easterbrook——'

'I, Jack Easterbrook,' he repeated.

'Do swear solemnly, before GOD ALMIGHTY——'

He repeated these words.

'That I will grant to Bess Westmoreland one more request, whatever she may ask me, before I die.'

He said after her, concluding with the words—

'Whatever she may ask me, before I die.'

She fetched a great sigh and kissed him again; and, throwing her arms round his neck, laid her head upon his shoulder.

I could not, for the life of me, understand what she meant; and still I thought that her brain must be wandering with her troubles.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW BESS WENT AWAY.

IT was only three weeks after the sentence that the condemned man received a summons to prepare himself for his execution, which was fixed for Monday, February the Twenty-third. This was a shorter space between sentence and execution than was awarded to the unhappy Admiral Byng, who had eight weeks in which to prepare himself for death. However, Jack complained not, and received the announcement in a becoming spirit, and presently sent a letter to my father, who lost no time in visiting him, and continued daily to visit him until the day of execution.

Now, here I have to write down a strange thing, and one which is hardly to be credited.

From the day of his trial (when, as I have said, the court was crowded with ladies) to the day before the execution, the ship was visited every day by ladies curious to see, and, if possible, to converse with, this young and unfortunate officer. But he would not receive any. Nay, every day letters came to him, full of tender messages and of prayers, some of them entreating him to grant them an interview, some openly declaring their passion for him, some humbly asking for a lock of his hair, or a line in his handwriting, some begging him to observe secrecy in his replies, and some offering their services in high quarters to procure him a pardon or a reprieve. To none of these letters did Jack reply a word, but tore all up and threw the fragments from his cabin window. One day, however (it was after the day had been fixed for carrying out the sentence), there came on board a lady who would take no denial, but wrote down her name upon the back of a playing card and peremptorily ordered that it should be taken to the Captain's cabin. She was so quick, however, that she

followed the messenger, and so forced her way in.

'My handsome Jack!' she cried, but stopped short, because she found another woman with him.

'Madam,' said Jack, rising, 'this is an unexpected honour.'

'I came, Captain,' she said, 'because we are old friends, and because I would fain help thee if I can.'

'No one can, Madam.'

'And because if I cannot, thou mayest still help me.'

'You may command me, Madam.'

'Nay,' she said, looking still at Bess, 'why so formal, Jack? 'Tis terrible to think that in a few days——'

'Madam, my time is short; pray remember that and be brief.'

'Why, Captain,' she laughed, 'twas but a little thing: and perhaps this lady will grant me five minutes alone——'

'It needs not,' said Jack; 'you can speak openly before her.'

'In that case it will be needless. Yet I will try. Captain, thou art condemned to die. 'Tis sad, indeed. Yet 'tis true. Now consider my case. I am deeply in debt. I have quarrelled with my Lord. Marry me, and so take my debts off my back. Nay, Madam'—for Bess sprang to her feet—'be pacified. 'Tis but an empty form that I ask. He shall marry me, and I will retire with the clergyman, and so he will free me at a stroke of all my debts.'

'Madam,' said Jack, before Bess could find time to speak, 'you are unfortunately too late. It is impossible that I could gratify you in this request, because I am married already. This lady is my wife—my most unfortunate wife.'

'Oh, Madam!' said the actress, with a deep curtsey, 'I beg humbly to be forgiven! Believe me, I did not know. Well, Captain'—she heaved a sigh—'of all the men I have ever known thou hast gone nearest to make me think I have a heart. My poor Jack!' She seized his hand and kissed it. 'Oh, Madam'—she turned to Bess—'I thought not of this. I thought I should find him over a bowl of

punch, drinking away his care. Alas! I remember you now. You loved him, and . . . I remember you. . . . Poor child! Who shall comfort thee?'

So she stole away, weeping, and left them alone.

It was, indeed, true. The first service which Jack had asked of my father was to marry him to Bess Westmoreland. It was done secretly in the cabin, with no other witnesses than myself and the First Lieutenant, Mr. Colin Macdonald. So Bess got her heart's desire, and the old witch's prophecy proved true, that in the midst of troubles she should marry the man she loved. But what a marriage! After this my father, as I have said, visited him daily, and every morning asked the prayers of the congregation for one about to die.

Then, as day followed day, and there wanted but two or three more, Bess became still more strange in her manner, showing a restlessness and impatience so that she could no longer remain quiet for five minutes

together, but must needs be pacing backwards and forwards, not crying or lamenting, but with burning face and eyes afire.

The sentence was to be carried out on the Monday morning. On Sunday, with a heart as heavy as lead, I prepared to say farewell.

I went on board about ten o'clock, at the time of morning prayers. Bess was already in the cabin, seated at the window, which was open, though the morning was cold, her face pressed against the bars. Jack was at the table, writing a letter for the Admiral.

'It is nearly finished, dear lad,' he said, looking up with a smile. 'Courage! The worst was over when the trial was done. To die would be nothing—but for leaving Bess. Be kind to her, Luke; be kind to her.'

I looked to see her burst into tears. But no—she listened without a tear or even a sob. 'This night, after I have parted with her, will be long, I fear. Your father hath comforted me greatly in the matter of religion, wherefore I have now a sure and certain hope, if I may humbly say so, though hitherto I have thought

little of these matters. It is a blessed thing for thoughtless sailors that we have a Church to rule our faith, and forms of prayer to save our souls. He will come to-morrow, for the last prayers, before seven. At eight, the boats of the ships in port will surround the ship, the death-signal will be displayed, a gun will be fired, the crew will be drawn up on the deck, and the prisoner will be brought out.' Bess listened without changing her countenance. Was she, then, turned into stone by sorrow, like Niobe?

I cannot write down the words with which he bade me farewell, nor my own. Suffice it that we took leave of each other with, on my side, all that a bleeding heart could find to say, and on his, with a message which I made haste to deliver to the Admiral, his patron and benefactor.

Then I left him alone with Bess.

It was arranged that they should part upon the hour when she must leave the ship and go ashore. He was peremptory that she must not try to see him in the morning, lest the sight

of her might unman him. To stand upon the deck with eyes unbandaged, resolute and firm, was the only duty left for him to perform. Therefore Bess must part with him on Sunday night. She acquiesced, still without a single tear. But when the hour drew near, instead of hanging round his neck and weeping, she took both his hands in hers, and said—

'Jack—dear Jack—my own Jack!—you made me a promise the other day. The time hath come to keep it.'

'A promise, dear heart? Why, what can I do for thee now?'

'You would grant any request that I should make. The time hath now come.'

''Tis granted beforehand, dear girl.'

'My request, Jack, is, that you will live, and not die.'

'Bess?'

'That you will live, and not die. Listen! We have arranged everything for this evening. Mr. Brinjes hath managed all for us. See!' She whispered him very earnestly.

He gazed at her in a sort of stupefaction.

'We shall not stay in the country. A Dutch boat waits us off Barking Creek; the master, a boy, and yourself, will sail her across to Holland. If the wind is fair, we shall make a Dutch port in a day—oh! it is all arranged. We shall not stay in Holland, but take ship to the Dutch East Indies, and thence to the South Seas, where we will live—oh! my Jack—far, far away from the world; and I will work for thee. So we shall forget the past and Deptford, and—and—everything, and there will be a new life for us—oh! a new life, whether it be short or long, with no one to remind us of what hath happened. Oh! my poor tortured dear—it is through me—through me—that all this disgrace hath come upon thee; yes—and it shall be through me that thy life shall be saved!'

'Bess, I cannot! They would say that it was fitting that one who could cowardly strike the flag should also cowardly run away from punishment.'

'What matter what they say? Shall we care what they say, when we are sailing together

among those islands? Will it touch our hearts any more to think of their praise, or blame?'

'Bess, I cannot!—oh! my tender heart, I cannot!'

'Then, Jack, thou SHALT. Thy promise is passed—a solemn promise before GOD. Wilt thou break that promise too, and go before Heaven, thy last act another broken pledge?'

Well, he fought awhile, and he yielded at length; and then she kissed him and went away; but she held her handkerchief to her eyes, so that those who saw her might not suspect.

At the head of the gangway, which, for the convenience of the court-martial, had been made into an accommodation-ladder, furnished with rails and side-ropes, stood Aaron Fletcher on guard.

'Thou art satisfied at last, Aaron?' said Bess.

'Not yet, but I shall be to-morrow,' he replied, whispering, because a sentry must not talk.

She said no more, but passed down the steps and into the boat.

In the afternoon, being in great distress of heart, I went to visit Mr. Brinjes. He was not sleeping, but was busied over a great number of small packages arranged in order upon the table.

'I have seen the last of him,' I said.

'Ay? Is Bess with him?'

'I am troubled about Bess. I think she hath gone distracted. For she weeps no more, and once I saw her laugh. She catches her breath, too, and is impatient.'

'For her distraction I will answer. I know a remedy for it, and that remedy she shall have. As for the catching of her breath, that too shall be cured; as for her impatience, I cannot help it, because it was impossible to complete the job before to-day.'

I asked him what he meant.

'Hath not Bess told you, then? Why, she was to have told you this morning before she broke the thing to Jack. 'Tis a good girl who can keep a secret. It is not true, mind ye, that

no woman can keep a secret. Where their lovers are concerned, they can keep fifty thousand basketsful of secrets, and never spill so much as a single one.'

He began to open the packets, and to count their contents. They contained guineas, about fifty in each packet, and there seemed to be no end of them.

'This,' he said, 'comes of twenty years honest industry. If a man takes in his shop six half-crowns a day and spends only one, in twenty years he shall be master, look you, of no less than four thousand pounds.'

Heavens! could he really be the owner of so great a property? When he had counted the money he dropped it into three or four leathern bags, which he tied to a belt below his waistcoat. 'Now,' said he, 'if we capsize, I shall go straight to Davy's Locker. Give me the skull-stick, my lad—so.' He looked at the horrid thing with admiration. 'I thought at first of giving it to Philadelphy, but now I will not, because she has lied to me about the Great

Secret, which I find she doth not, after all, possess. So much I suspected. She shall not have the Obeah stick. Besides, Heaven knows whither we are going, or what powers we may want; therefore, I shall keep the stick.' He wrapped a cloth about the skull, and tied it up so that no one should know what it was. Then he laid it upon the table.

I observed then that everything was ready as if for departure. The shelves were empty; the fire was out; there were ashes of burnt paper in the grate; the famous charts were rolled up and lying on the table, beside the skull-stick. What did it mean?

'Why,' he said, 'since Bess hath not told you, I will not either. But—I think we can trust thee, Luke—surely we can trust thee, if anyone. Thou lovest Jack, I know, and Bess too, in thy mild and milky way. Why, a lad of spirit would have carried the girl off years ago, Jack, or no Jack. However—that is enough. My lad, we want thy help. There is no other that we can trust. It is life or

death . . . life or death . . . life or death. Say that to thyself, and *forget not to be here at nine of the clock this evening.*'

'What is to be done at nine?'

'It is life or death, I say. Life or death! Now go; I have much to do. It is life or death. Two lives or two deaths. Life or death. Therefore, fail not.'

At nine o'clock I kept my appointment, wondering what would happen.

Bess was there, wrapped in a cloak and hood; in her hand she carried a small parcel. Mr. Brinjes was waiting, muffled and cloaked, his hat tied over his ears, and a roll—containing, I suppose, his charts and his famous skull-stick—under his arm.

'Come, lad,' he said, 'thou shalt know soon what it is we have to do.'

It was a dark and rainy night; the wind blew in gusts; the streets were deserted, save for some drunken fellow who rolled along, bawling as he went. Mr. Brinjes led the way towards the river, and we were presently at the

Stairs, where the boats lay fastened to the rings by their long painters.

'Take the outside boat of all,' said the Apothecary; 'her oars are left in her on purpose. So, haul her to the Stairs. Step in, Bess. She is but a dingey, but she will serve. Luke, you have to row. You may shut your eyes, and keep them shut, if you like, for I shall steer.'

I began to suspect that something serious was to be attempted, but I obeyed without question or remonstrance.

'Twas then high tide, or a little on the ebb, so that at midnight the ebb would be at its strongest. I cast off the painter and shoved off. Then I took my seat and the oars, and rowed while Mr. Brinjes steered.

The river was rough and dark, save for the lights displayed by the ships. The 'Calypso' was moored very nearly off the mouth of the dock, but in mid-stream. Mr. Brinjes suffered me to row almost across the river, as if he were making for one of the Stairs on the other side. Then he put her head up stream, and steered so that the boat approached

the 'Calypso,' whose lights he knew, not as if we were boarding her, but as if we were making our way across her bows to the Dog-and-Duck Stairs of Redriff. The precaution was not necessary, perhaps, seeing how dark it was; but the eyes of sailors are sharper than those of landsmen; and the watch must not allow a boat to approach a ship without a challenge. We crossed the bows, therefore, of the 'Calypso,' I still rowing, and the boat apparently heading to the opposite shore.

But while we were still under the shadow, so to speak, of the great ship's bows, my coxswain whispered, 'Easy rowing—-ship oars.'

I could not guess what he intended. 'Twas this.

The 'Calypso' lay pretty high out of water. The tide was running strong. Mr. Brinjes turned the boat's head and ran her straight under the side of the ship. He then, being as quick and skilful in the handling of a boat as any man sixty years younger, stepped into the bows, and with hand and boat-hook worked the boat along the side of the vessel to the

stern, where he hooked on, and whispered that we must now wait.

'We have more than two hours still to wait. I think the watch will have no suspicion, and 'tis better to wait here an hour or two than to hurry at the end, and so perhaps be seen and the whole plot spoiled. Here we lie snug.'

We might be lying snug, but we lay more than commonly cold, and the wind and rain beat into one's face. Bess sat, however, with her hood thrown back, careless of cold or rain; and Mr. Brinjes lay muffled up in the bows. But in his hand he held the boat-hook.

The ship's bells and the town clocks and the Greenwich clocks made such a clashing in our ears every quarter of an hour, as kept us aware of the time—never before did I understand how slowly he crawleth. Why, there seemed to me an hour between each quarter, and a whole night between each hour.

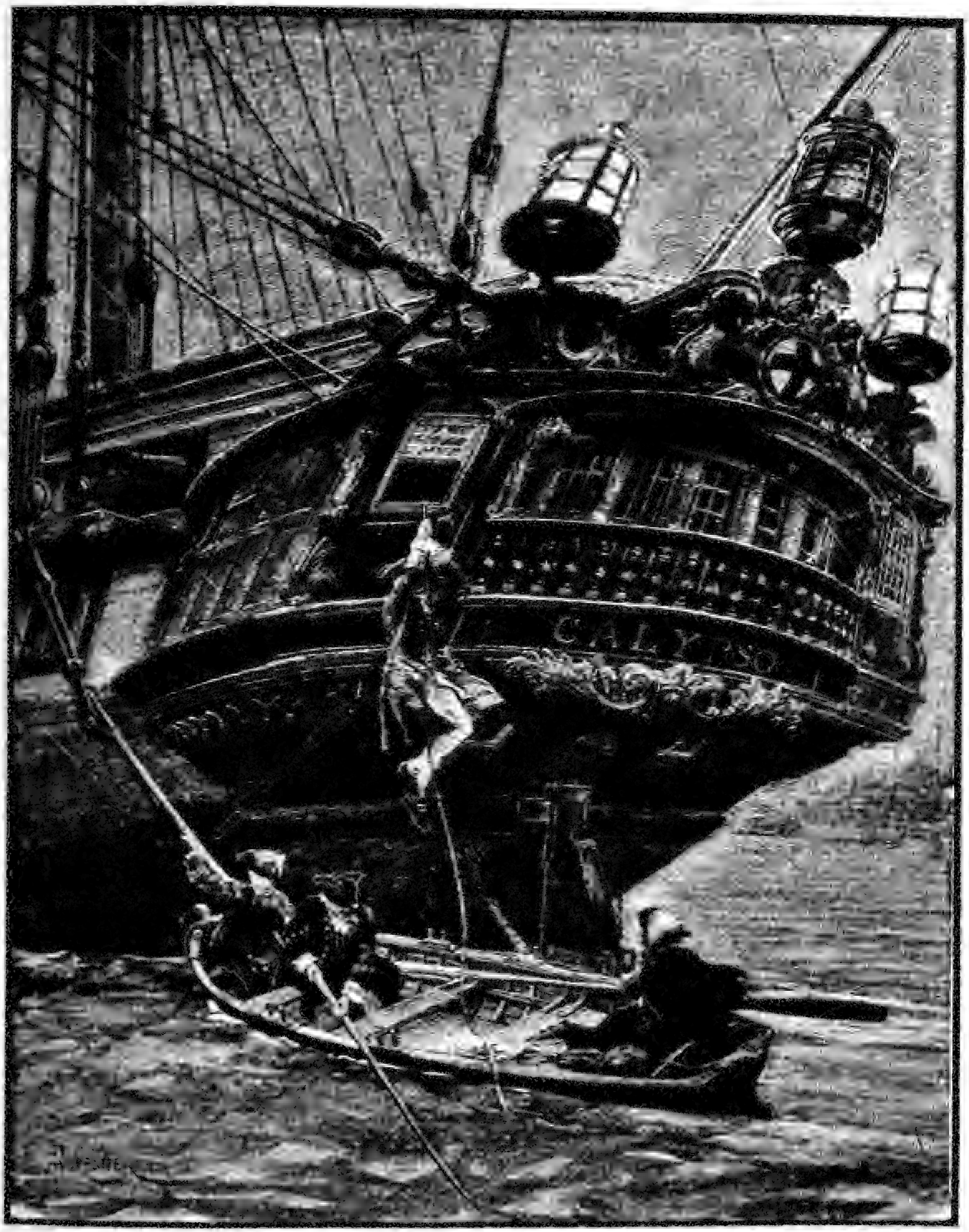
When the clocks began to strike midnight Bess looked up and the old man threw off his

cloak. 'Oars out,' he whispered. 'Gently. Don't splash. Here he is!'

We were immediately, though I knew it not, below the windows of Jack's cabin, which was the Captain's state-room. Below his window were those of the First and Second Lieutenants, and Mr. Brinjes had chosen the time of midnight, because then the watches would be changing, and these officers would be on deck or else fast asleep. It was as he expected. The end of a rope fell into the water close beside the boat, and then, hand under hand, our prisoner came swiftly down. In a moment he was sitting in the stern. Then Mr. Brinjes let go, and the tide, hurrying down the river as fast as a mill race, carried us noiselessly and swiftly away.

No one spoke; but Mr. Brinjes again took the ropes, and I began to row. We were very soon, keeping in mid stream, past Greenwich, and past Woolwich, I rowing as hard as I could, and the ebb-tide strong, so that we made very good way indeed.

Presently we came alongside a small vessel



'Hand under hand, our prisoner came swiftly down.'

lying moored off Barking Creek, and Mr. Brinjes steered the boat alongside, and caught a rope.

'Now, Bess,' he said, 'quick; climb up.'

She caught hold of the cleats, and ran up the rude gangway as nimbly as any sailor. Mr. Brinjes followed.

Then Jack seized my hand. 'Farewell, dear lad,' he said, 'I thought not to see thee again. Farewell.'

So he followed, and left me alone in the boat.

'Sheer off, Luke,' said Mr. Brinjes looking over the side; 'sheer off, and take her back to the Stairs. Tell no one what hath been done. Farewell. We sail for the Southern Seas.'

Then I saw that they were hoisting sail. She was a Dutch galliot carrying a main and mizen-mast, with a large gaff mainsail. This, with a flying topsail, and the usual fore-and-aft canvas, would with this wind and tide take her down to the North Foreland very quickly, after which, if the wind still continued fair, she might

expect to make the port of Rotterdam in sixteen, or perhaps twenty hours more.

When I had painfully pulled the boat up stream and gotten her back in her place at the Stairs, and was at last in bed, I began to understand fully what had been done—namely, that a great crime had been committed in the rescue of a prisoner sentenced to death, and that, with my two accomplices, I was liable to be tried and——I fell asleep before I could remember what the punishment would be.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE next morning my father was astir by six; and I, hearing him, and remembering suddenly what had happened, could sleep no more, but rose quickly, and dressed. He was already in wig and cassock; his clerk in readiness with prayer-book, bible, and the materials wherewith to administer the Supper of the Lord.

'My son,' he said, 'the ministration to a dying man is the most awful part of a clergyman's holy duties; and yet it is that which should most fill him with gratitude and joy. Terrible it is at all times to watch the soul take its flight into the unknown regions: most terrible of all when death comes violently upon one still young and strong and in the prime of his day.'

More he would have said; but here we were interrupted by the arrival of the Admiral himself, borne in an arm-chair by his four negroes, his feet swathed in flannel, and himself wrapped in warm cloaks, for 'twas dangerous for him to leave the warmth of his own room.

'Doctor,' he said, when the men had set him down, 'you are now about to comfort our boy in his last moments.' Here he paused awhile, the tears running down his cheeks 'His last moments, poor lad,' he repeated. 'I could not lie still and think that he should die without a word from me. Therefore, though I would not turn his thoughts away from religion, I cannot let him die with never a word from his father's oldest friend. 'Twere inhuman. Tell him, therefore, from me, that I now plainly perceive that he was mad. Other men besides himself have gone mad at sea. I know one who went mad and jumped overboard, in a storm; and another who went mad and ran amuck on the quarter-deck with a cutlass, wounding many before he was disarmed; and another——but no matter. He was mad.

Tell him that for the act of God, there is nothing but resignation. The thing might have happened to any. We are fools to feel any shame in it. As for all that went before and that came after his madness, tell him we are proud of him therefore, and we shall remain proud of him. But for his own sake,we are grieved that he was not killed in the recapture of the vessel. Bid him, therefore, meet his death with a calm heart—a brave heart, I know, will not fail him. Take him my last blessing, and my undiminished love. There is no question, tell him, of forgiveness. The act of God must not be questioned. But the pity of it—oh! Doctor—the pity of it!' and with that he fell to weeping like a child.

And then the two old men wept together, but I, who knew what had happened and that there would be no execution that day, had no tears.

They carried back the Admiral and put him to bed again, and I accompanied my father as far as the Stairs. As I returned slowly, my heart full of strange emotions, the bell of St. Paul's began to toll the passing knell. No need

to ask for whom that bell was tolling. At the sound the women came to the doors and began to cry, and to talk together, full of pity, the kind-hearted creatures, shrews as they were, and slatterns, and drabs. The old men at the Trinity Hospital were gathered together in their quadrangle, talking of the boy they had known and loved. The Barber and his four 'prentices were busy shaving, the shop full, everybody talking at the same time; and in his doorway stood Mr. Westmoreland, looking up and down the street with troubled face.

'Where is she?' he asked. 'Mr. Luke, where is my Bess?'

'Indeed, Mr. Westmoreland,' I replied, 'where should she be if not in her own bed?'

'She hath not been home all night. I have heard talk of her and Captain Easterbrook. But that poor young man is to be shot this morning. Where can she be? They tell me that she spends the days in his cabin. Sir, you know them both: I' faith he hath played her false. Who would have daughters? Yet if she is all day long with him, needs must that

she come ashore in the evening, Mr. Luke. Who, sir, I ask you, would have daughters to plague his old age? I thought she might have stayed at the Apothecary's, and I have knocked, but can make no one hear. Think you that Mr. Brinjes is dead? He is already of a great old age. This is a terrible morning. That poor young gentleman must die; he must be cut off in the pride of his life and strength, the comeliest man I have ever seen, and he hath stolen my daughter's heart away. Why, what shall I do with her when he is dead? How shall I endure her despair and her grief? how find consolation to assuage her wrath when he is gone?'

I knew very well how that question would be answered. But I could not tell him what had happened.

'It is his passing bell,' the Penman continued. 'Lord, have mercy upon his soul! He is young, and hath doubtless committed some of the sins of youth; the Lord forgive him! He hath often used profane language, and that in my hearing. The Lord forgive him! As

for his striking his colours, that will not, I am sure, be laid to his charge. Besides, he hath atoned for this sin by his death. The Lord forgive him for an honest and brave lad! 'Twas once a joy to see him handle his logarithms. Will they bury him in St. Paul's churchyard? Poor lad! Poor lad! What shall I say to Bess to comfort her when she comes home?'

Thus he went on prattling; but I left him.

At the door of Mr. Brinjes' shop stood his assistant, knocking.

'Sir,' he said, 'I am afraid that something hath happened to my master, for I have knocked and cannot make him hear.'

I advised him to wait half an hour or so, and then to knock again.

It was impossible to rest. I went again to the Stairs, where the watermen should be hanging about. There was not one man there, nor a single boat. Round the 'Calypso' there was a great fleet of ships' boats, and Thames boats, all waiting for the execution. People had

come down from London—even, they said, as far as from Chelsea—to see the sight. Why, they could see nothing from the river. True, they might have the satisfaction of hearing the roll of the muskets. There never was so great a concourse on the river, even on the day of Horn Fair.

At eight o'clock—the time of execution—everybody listened to hear the rattling of the guns. But there was silence. Presently, I know not how it began, there sprang up a rumour—only a rumour at first—that the sentence would not be carried out that morning; then it became certain that there would be no execution at all; and it was spread abroad that at the last moment, the Captain had been respited. About eleven o'clock the boats dispersed and returned again, the people disappointed. It was not until later that it was known—because at first no one, not even my father and his clerk, were allowed to leave the ship—that Captain Easterbrook could not be shot because he could not be found.

I found the Apothecary's shop open—they

had broken in at the back—and the assistant was mixing medicines and prescribing.

'Sir,' he said, 'my master is gone. He hath not slept in his bed. He hath taken his money and his charts, but nothing else.'

'His money and his charts? How do you know that he has taken his money?'

'I know where he kept it and I looked to see if it was gone. Because, I said, if my master's money is still there, he will return. But it is gone; therefore I know that he has gone.'

'Whither hath he gone, sirrah?'

'I know not, sir; any more'—here he looked mighty cunning—'than I know whither Captain Easterbrook hath gone, or Bess Westmoreland, or what you were doing with my master and Bess on the Stairs last night at nine o'clock.'

Now, I have never learned if this man knew more than the fact that we were upon the Stairs at that time. Certainly, he could not know the whole truth.

'I think,' I said, 'that if I were you, I

would continue to carry on the business without asking any questions, until your master returns.'

'I will, sir,' he replied; and he did. His master did not return, and this fortunate young man succeeded to a good stock and a flourishing trade, and would doubtless have become rich but for the accident of being killed by a drunken sailor.

When it became known that Mr. Brinjes, Bess, and the Captain had all disappeared on the same evening, it was impossible not to connect these three events; and all the world believed (what was perfectly true) that the girl had run away with the Captain, and that Mr. Brinjes had gone, too, out of pure affection for them.

The Admiral presently recovered from his attack, but he went no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and entirely lost his former spirits; and, as I have already said, within a year or two was carried off by an attack of gout in the stomach. Shortly afterwards I was so happy as to win the affections of Castilla. She informed

me that, although she was carried away by natural pride in so gallant a wooer as Jack, she had never felt for him such an assurance in his constancy as is necessary to secure happiness, and that when she heard of his infatuated passion for so common a creature as Bess Westmoreland, she was thankful for her release, though she deplored the sad cause of it. 'We no longer,' she often says, 'burn women for witchcraft, but such a girl as Bess, who can so bewitch a gallant man as to make him invoke the curse of Heaven upon himself if he prove inconstant, and thereby bring him to shame and disgrace, ought to be punished in some condign and exemplary manner.' It is not my practice to argue with my wife, especially on points where we are not likely to agree; and as Bess will probably never return, and cannot, therefore, be punished, Castilla may say anything she please about her. For my own part, my heart has always been with that poor girl, who did not seek for or expect the honour of Jack's affections, and whose witchery was in her beauty and her black eyes.

On the conclusion of peace in 1762, Aaron Fletcher, with many other Marines, was disbanded, but he was afraid to venture back into Deptford, where his creditors would have arrested him. I know not for a certainty what he did to bring the arm of the law upon him; but I know what became of him. For one day, being at Limehouse, I saw going along the road on the way to the Stairs, where were waiting several ships' boats, a dismal company of convicts, for embarkation to the plantations of Jamaica, or Barbadoes, or some other West Indian Island. There were at least a hundred of them, walking two and two, handcuffed in pairs. Some of these were in rags, some shaking with prison fever, some dejected, some angry and mutinous, some were singing —there are wretches so hardened that they will sing ribald songs on their way even to the gallows. One there was of appearance and bearing superior to the rest, by whose side there walked a young woman, his wife or mistress, bearing a baby, and crying bitterly; another, beside whom walked a grave and

sober citizen, the brother or cousin of the convict, the tears in his eyes. But mostly there were no friends or relations to mourn over this outcast crew. And at the head marched a band of fifes and drums, playing 'Through the woods, laddie'; and a crowd of boys followed, whooping and hallooing. When the procession was nearly past, I was surprised to see among the men, handcuffed together, no other than Aaron Fletcher and Mr. Jonathan Rayment, the crimp. The latter was pale, and his fat cheeks shook, and all his limbs trembled with fever. 'Twould have been merciful to let him lie till death should carry him off. But Aaron walked upright, looking about him with eyes full of mutiny and murder. I know not if he saw me; but the procession filed past, and the band went on playing at the head of the Stairs while the wretches embarked on board the boats. As for the crimes which Aaron and his companion had committed, I do not know what they were, but I suspect kidnapping formed part. I have never learnt what became of Mr. Rayment; but concerning

Aaron there afterwards came intelligence that he could not brook the overseer's lash and the hot sun, and fled, with intent to join the wild Maroons, but was followed by bloodhounds, and pursued, and, being brought back to his master, was naturally flogged. He then sickened of a calenture and died. He was a bad man; but he was punished for his sins. Indeed, it is most true that the way of transgressors is hard.

Lastly, to complete this narrative, I must tell you of a message which came to me five or six years after the court-martial. It was brought even from the Southern Seas. Heard one ever of a message or letter from that remote and unknown part?

There was a certain wild fellow, Deptford born, Will Acorn by name. This young man, for sins of his which need not delay us, left his native town, where he had been brought up as a shipwright, and went to sea. Nor did he come back again for several years, when he reappeared, the old business being now blown over and forgotten. And presently he

came to my house, I then living in St. Martin Street for convenience of business, and told me a strange story.

With some other privateers of Jamaica, where these fellows are mostly found, he must needs try his fortune in the South Seas. Accordingly, they got possession of a brig, or barcolongo, as they call this kind of ship in the West Indies, and they armed her with certain carronades and peteraroes, and to the number of eighty or ninety stout men, all fully armed, put out to sea. In short, they proposed to go a-pirating among the Spanish settlements, as many have done before them.

It matters not here what was the success of their voyage—Will Acorn, at least, returned home in a very ragged and penniless condition. This, however, was the man's story.

'We sighted one morning at daybreak, being then not far from Masa Fuera, a large brigantine flying Spanish colours. She was much too big for us to tackle, therefore we hoisted the Spanish flag, too, and bore away, hoping that she would let us alone, and go on

her own course. But that would not suit her, neither, and she fired a shot across our bows, as a signal to back sail. This we did, expecting nothing short of hanging, for she carried thirty guns at least, and we could see that she was well manned, and looked as if she was handled by a French Captain, under whom even a Creolian Spanish crew will fight. Well, she spoke us when she was near enough, and ordered, in Spanish, that the Captain was to come aboard. Now, as I was the only man who had any Spanish, our Captain bade me come with him. So I went; and we thought we were going to instant death, the Spaniards being born devils when they get an English crew in their power.

'Sir,' this honest fellow continued, 'think of our astonishment when, on climbing the vessel's side, they ran up the pirate's flag; to be sure, we were little else than pirates ourselves; but we knew not what countrymen these were. As for the crew, they were nearly all black negroes, and a devilish fighting lot they looked, being armed with pistols and cutlasses,

while the decks were cleared for action, and every man to quarters, and the whole as neat and clean as aboard a British man-o'-war. And on the quarter-deck there stood, glass in hand, none other than Captain Easterbrook himself, the same as was tried by court-martial, sentenced, and escaped. He was dressed very fine, in crimson silk, with a gold chain, and pistols in his belt. I knew him directly; but his face is changed, for now it is the face of one who gives no quarter. A fiercer face I never saw anywhere.

'But the strangest thing was that I saw lying in the sun, propped up by pillows and cushions, the old Deptford Apothecary, Mr. Brinjes. He looked no older, and no younger; his one eye twinkling and winking, and his face covered with wrinkles.

'"Will Acorn, ahoy!" he sings out. "Will Acorn, by the Lord!"

'When he said this there came out from the Captain's cabin a most splendid lady, dressed in all the satins and silks you can think of, with gold chains round her neck, and jewels spark-

ling in her hair. Behind her came two black women, holding a silken sunshade over her head. Why, Sir, 'twas none other than Bess Westmoreland, the Penman's daughter, and more beautiful than ever, though her cheek was pale, and her eyes were somewhat anxious.

'"Will Acorn?" she cried. "Is that Will Acorn, of Deptford Town?"

'So with that the Captain called us from the poop. "Hark ye," he said, "you seem to be Englishmen. What ship is yours?"

'So we told him who we were, and why we were cruising in those seas. He listened—'tis a terrible fighting face—and heard us out, and then bade us drink and go our way.

'"I war not with Englishmen," he said; "but for French and Spaniard I know no quarter."

'He said no more, but his lady—Bess Westmoreland that was—stepped out to us, and asked me many questions about Deptford folk. And then she put into my hands this parcel, which I faithfully promised to deliver into your hands, Sir, should I ever return home again.

And I was to tell you that they had found Mr. Brinjes' island, and she was as happy as she could expect to be. And then Mr. Brinjes lifted his head, and said, in a piping voice, "And tell him," he said, with his one eye like a burning coal, "tell Luke Anguish, man, that we committed the town of Guayaquil to the flames. 'Twould have done his heart good to see the town on fire, and the Spaniards roasting like so many heretics at the stake!"'

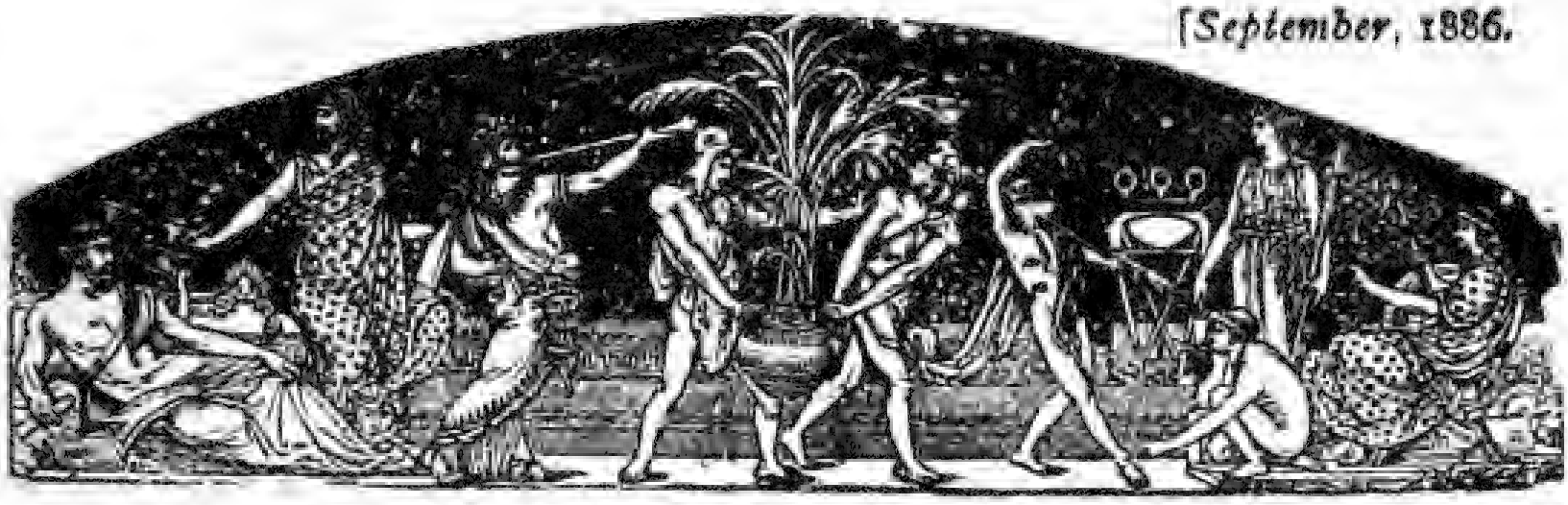
This was the message. The parcel contained a gold chain and cross, set with precious stones, which I gave to Castilla, hoping thereby to make her think less hardly of poor Bess. But in vain; though she wears the chain, which, she says—though this is not the case—was sent to her by Captain Easterbrook, in token of his repentance, and of his unhappiness with the woman who bewitched him, and of his continual sorrow for the loss of her own hand.

It is now more than thirty years ago, and since then we have heard nothing more. I conjecture that either they have long since

been swallowed up in a hurricane, Bess dying, as she wished, at the same moment as Jack, or that they are still living somewhere in those warm and sunny islands of which the Apothecary was never wearied of discoursing.

THE END

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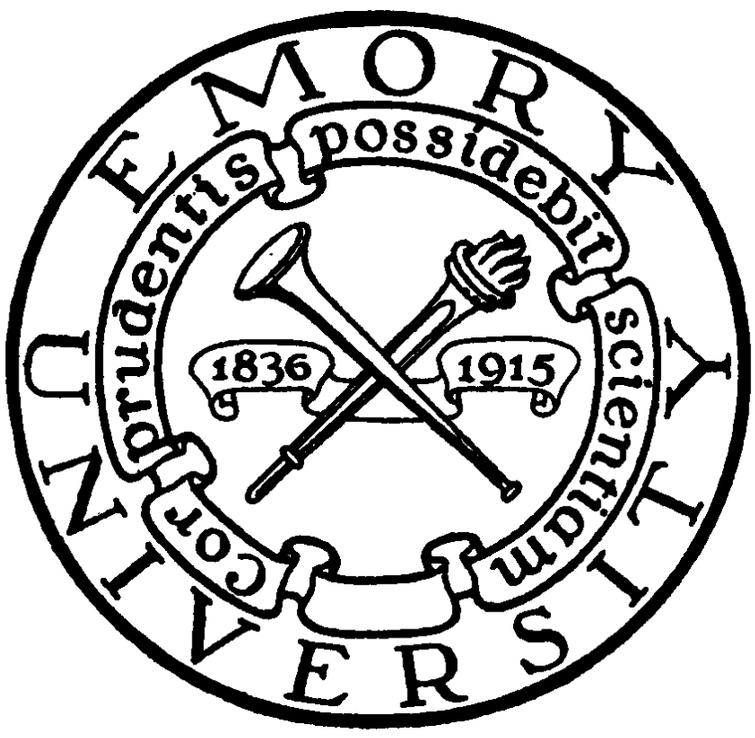
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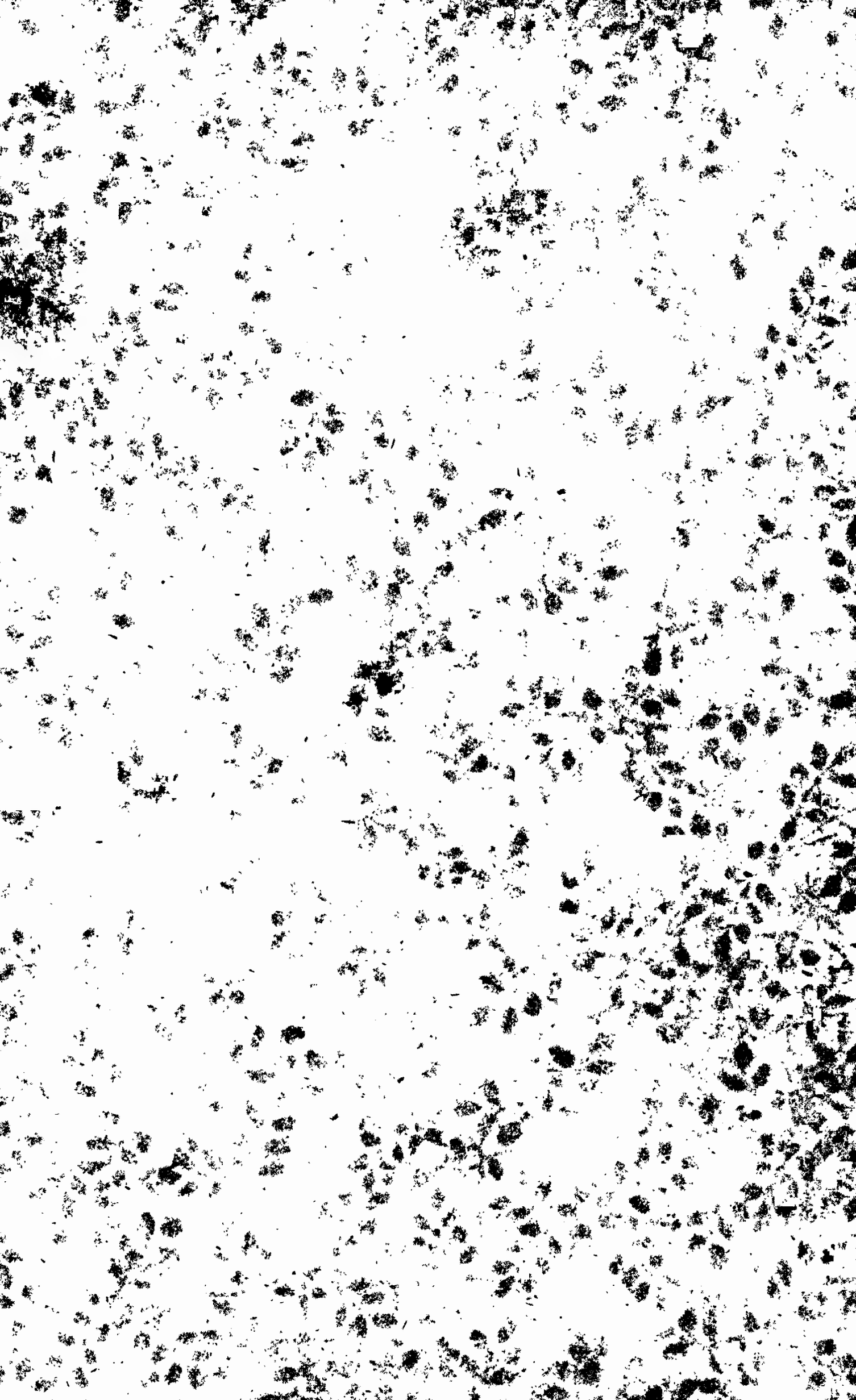


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THE WORLD WENT VERY WELL THEN.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALAS! POOR BESS!

ALAS! poor Bess!

You have heard how she spent the first day, and with what a heavy heart she went to bed. In the morning she plucked up heart a little. As for what the Lieutenant said to her father, what matter if he did say that she was already married? It was his joke—Jack would ever have his joke. He had been busy all day. The evening he must needs spend with the Admiral, his patron and benefactor. But he would not—he could not—fail to see her the

second day. So again she dressed in her best, and repaired early to her place in the Apothecary's parlour, where she took her seat and waited. But she laughed no longer, nor did she prattle. Jack came not; he was in London, taking a lodging in Ryder Street, and buying brave things in which to wait upon his Lordship. And the third day she went again —but now with white cheeks and heavy eyes, and she rocked herself to and fro, replying nothing, whatever Mr. Brinjes might say to her.

In the afternoon of that day I went in search of her, being anxious, and dreading mischief.

'I know not,' said Mr. Westmoreland, getting off the stool, 'I know not, indeed, Mr. Luke, what hath happened to the girl, nor where she is, unless she is in Mr. Brinjes' parlour, where most of her days are spent. These three days she hath forgotten to give me any meals, and hath left me alone all day; while in the evening, when I come home, she either sits mum or she goes upstairs. Nothing disturbs the mind in the midst of logarithms

more than a doubt whether there will be any dinner to eat or any supper. At this time of the year I commonly look for soft cheese and a cucumber. But now I have to get what I can. I know not what ails her. If I did know I question whether I could find any remedy, seeing that she is so headstrong. Sometimes I doubt whether there is some love trouble on her mind. Yet I know not with whom. It cannot be with Aaron Fletcher, because she has refused the young man several times. Besides, his affairs are said to be well-nigh desperate, his boat being lost, his yard burned down, his boat-building business thrown away; yet, if it is not Aaron, who can it be? Because, Sir, though my daughter hath her faults, and those many, being as to temper equalled only by her mother, now in Abraham's bosom, or—or—perhaps elsewhere,' he added, being a truthful man; 'yet, she is not one who courts the company of men, nor listens willingly to the voice of love.'

Mr. Brinjes, though it was in the afternoon, was talking with his assistant in his shop.

'You will find her,' he said, 'within. I have left her for five minutes, for it teases me to see her thus despairing. The worst has yet to come, because she is not a girl to sit down peaceably under this contempt. Well, for that matter, every sailor is inconstant, if you please; and the women know it, and expect it. But Bess is no common Poll o' the Point, who looks for nothing else than to be forgotten. Nor did she first seek him out. Yet I knew what would happen, because such love as his was too hot to last—else would it burn him up. There was a Bristol man in Captain Roberts' company was consumed for love of a young Coromantyn girl, wasting away and crying out that he was on fire, yet never happy unless she was at his side. It is a natural witchery which a few women possess, by which they make men love them, and draw the very soul out of the man they love. Bess hath this power: she can make any man love her, and when she loves a man she can bewitch him so that he shall never be happy but at her feet. Why, Jack hath forgotten her. Yet it is most true

that, if he but come back to her for a single day, he would fall at her feet again.'

'Nay,' I said, 'he is already in love with another woman.'

'Miss Castilla, the Admiral's daughter. It is a passing fancy, because she is a pretty creature, small and slender. But to compare her with Bess!—to think that a man can love her as he can love Bess! There, you know nothing of love. Go in there, and I will follow. I have known,' he continued, being garrulous, as old men often are, 'I have known such cases as this of Bess—the jealous woman who hath been forgotten—ay, I have known them by the hundred. Sometimes they take it with a sudden rage; sometimes they cry out for a knife, and would kill their faithless lover first and themselves next; sometimes they throw themselves into the water; sometimes they murder the other woman; sometimes they laugh, and lay by for a chance of revenge. One woman I knew who concealed her wrath for twenty years, but revenged herself in the end. Sometimes they make up their minds

that it matters little. This case is peculiar; for the patient is not in a rage—as yet; nor has she called for a knife—as yet; nor has she promised to hang herself—as yet; but she sits and waits; and all the time the humours are mounting to the brain; so that we are only at the beginning of the disorder, and my forecast as to this disease is, my lad, that we shall have trouble. What? Is a fine high-spirited girl to be shoved aside into the gutter without a word said, or any cause pretended? Not so, Sir; not so. There will be trouble.'

I passed into the parlour with trepidation. Bess lifted her head. Her face was pale and haggard; wildness was in her eyes.

'Where is he?' she cried. 'You call yourself my friend, yet you come without him. Where is he?'

'I do not know, Bess, where he is, unless that he is somewhere in London.'

'I believe it is you who have kept him from me—yet you call yourself my friend. You have set him against me. Though what you have found to say I know not. I have

not so much as looked at another man since he went away, and I have kept his secret for him, so that no one suspects. How dare you put yourself between my sweetheart and me?'

'Indeed, Bess,' I told her, 'I have said nothing against you. I have not put myself between Jack and you. I have said nothing.'

Then she began to rail at me for my silence. Why had I not spoken of her? Why had I not reminded him of his faith and promised constancy? 'And where is he,' she repeated, 'that he does not come to me? Is he afraid of me? Doth he try to hide himself out of my way?'

I told her that he was in lodgings in town, and that his time was taken up with his affairs. And then, because she began to upbraid me again, I thought it was better to tell her the truth, and, therefore, said plainly that the Lieutenant loved her no longer; that he had, indeed, given me to understand, without the possibility of a mistake, that the past was clean forgotten, and gone out of his mind.

I was sorry—truly, I was sorry—for the

poor creature. For every word I said was nothing less than a dagger into her heart. A man must have been as hard-hearted as a Romish inquisitor not to have felt sorry for her. She heard me with parted lips and panting breath. Is there, I wonder, a more dreadful task than to be the messenger to tell a fond woman that the man she loves now loathes her?

Seeing that she received my information with no more outward symptom of wrath, I began to point out, to the best of my ability, that Lieutenant Easterbrook, when he fell in love with her, was still less than twenty years of age, who had been for six years separated from his countrywomen, and had forgotten what an Englishwoman should be; that he might have fallen in love with one of his own rank, but for his long wanderings among savages, and his imprisonment with common sailors, which had left him rough and rude in manners; that things were now quite changed, because he was not only an officer of some rank, but was now a gallant gentleman, keeping company of the best, and might, if he

desired, marry an heiress; that his long silence ought to have prepared her for the change in his disposition; and that, seeing nobody except Mr. Brinjes and myself knew of what had happened, a wise and prudent girl would show her pride, and take her revenge by showing that she cared nothing for his neglect. In fact, I said on this occasion all that was proper to be said. Mr. Brinjes sat silent in his chair, but kept his eye upon Bess, as if expecting that something would happen.

Then, long before I had finished all I had to say, Bess suddenly sprang to her feet with a cry, and burst forth into wild and ungoverned wrath. I have seen fishwives fighting at Billingsgate, a ring of men and women round them, and a truly dreadful thing it is to see women stripped for battle and using their fists like men; never before, or since, have I seen a young and beautiful girl thus give way to passion uncontrolled. At first she could find no words to express her wrath; she clutched at her heart; she tore down her hair; she gasped for breath; she swung her arms abroad; she

swayed her body backward and forward. I looked to see Mr. Brinjes go seek his lancet, and give her relief by breathing a vein. But he did not. He sat looking on coldly and anxiously, as if he was watching the progress of a fever. Presently she found words.

I will not write down what she said, because, as regards myself and Mr. Brinjes, her reproaches were wholly undeserved, and, indeed, we had been throughout her best friends. Besides, the ravings of a *femina furens*, or woman mad with jealousy and disappointed love, ought not to be set down, any more than those of a man in delirium. When she came to speak of her faithless lover she choked, and presently stopped and was silent. But, poor soul! all the while she looked from one to the other of us as if to find hope in our faces, but saw none. Finally, she shrieked aloud, as if she could no longer bear this agony, and hurled herself headlong upon the floor, and so lay, her head upon her hands, her whole body convulsed.

'Let be, let be,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'after this she will be better. The storm was

bound to burst. Better that it should rage in this room than that she should go to a certain house we know of'—he jerked his finger in the direction of the Admiral's. 'Say nothing to her; if you speak you will make her worse. Presently she will come round. What? Nature can go no farther, unless she would wear herself to pieces. And they never go so far as that, whatever their wrath, because the pain of the body becomes intolerable.'

He spoke as if she could not hear or was insensible, which I take to have been the case, for in five minutes or so she sat up, taking no notice of what had been said, and became partly rational, and said calmly, sitting on the floor, that she should go away and kill Jack first, and herself afterwards; and she declared that, if he dared to address any other woman, she would tear her limb from limb. So that I trembled for Castilla. But Mr. Brinjes looked on without surprise or terror, murmuring, 'Let be, let be; it will do her good. And I have seen them worse.'

And, indeed, presently she arose from the

ground and tied up her beautiful hair, which had fallen about her shoulders, and smoothed her disordered frock, and sat down again in the window-seat, clasping her knees with her hands, moaning and weeping, and rocking herself to and fro. And at this symptom of progress or development of the 'case,' the Apothecary nodded and winked at me, as much as to say that the disease was taking a favourable turn.

He knew the symptoms, this learned physician, who had studied woman's nature where it is the most ungovernable and the most exposed to observation, among the negresses, and, I suppose, applied to more civilised women the rules he had learned among these artless pagans. For, in fact, she speedily ceased either to weep or to moan, but sat upright, drew a long breath, and spoke quite gently and prettily, like a little child who has been naughty, and now promises to be good again.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'that I have given so much trouble—I will never do it again.

Mr. Brinjes, you have not had your nap, nor your afternoon punch, through my fault. I will mix you a glass, and then you shall go to sleep.' She did so, and arranged his pillows for him, and in a few minutes afterwards the old man was sound asleep. Then Bess turned to me. 'Forgive me, Luke,' she said, giving me her hand; 'you are my best friend—except this poor old man, you are my only friend. You have never been weary of teaching me how a gentlewoman should behave, so that I should be worthy of a gentleman: and now it has ended in this. He has forgotten me, who have never forgotten him—no, not for a moment, since the day when first he told me—oh! the happy day! He came into the room where I was sitting before the fire and took me in his arms—oh! in his arms! Could I ever forget him? No—no; not for a moment.'

'My poor Bess!' I said. 'What can I say—what do—for you in this dreadful trouble?'

The tears stood in her eyes, but she wept no longer.

'I know,' she said, after a while, 'what I

will do. Here is his letter to me.' She drew it from her bosom. It went to my heart to see the prettily-worked silken bag she had made for it with her own hands. 'First, you shall take it to him, Luke, and give it to him yourself. Will you do so much for me? It is not a great thing to ask you, is it? Give it to him and tell him that he must read it, and then bring it back to me. And Luke, dear Luke, you have always been kind to me, always my friend, though you know nothing about love, do you? Else you would understand that a woman would rather die than lose her lover. Give him the letter. When he reads it, he will remember, and then——then, Luke!—— You will tell him—oh! tell him'—she laid her hands upon my arm, and gazed upon me with imploring eyes—'tell him, dear friend, that I am more beautiful than ever—Mr. Brinjes says I am—and that I have tried to teach myself the ways of a gentlewoman, for his sake; and that I can read and write, a little, so that he shall not be ashamed of me; and that I associate no more with the other girls, and have

been true to him ever since he went away. Tell him all, Luke, and everything else that you can think of that is kind and friendly, and that will make him want to see me again. Oh, if he were here in this room with me for one hour he would love me again!'

'I will take the letter, Bess,' I told her, moved to tears; 'and I will give it to him myself, and tell him all that you wish; and more—more, my poor Bess!'

'When will you give it to him?'

'To-morrow. Will that do?'

So with that promise she appeared to be more contented, and went away, though with hanging head—the poor, fond, loving girl!

'You may give the Lieutenant that letter,' said the Apothecary, 'and you may tell him what you please. But, if I know Jack Easterbrook, you might as well try to knock him down with a feather. As for making her his wife, it is out of the question; and to become his mistress without being his wife, Bess would not consent; nor, I think, would Jack ask her. Because, d'ye see, he no longer cares a rope's

yarn about her. Yet, if he would come here for a single hour—Bess knows her power—trust a woman who has that power. But I think he will not come. And so there will be trouble—I know not yet of what kind—there will be trouble.'

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN AMBASSADOR OF LOVE.

I READILY accepted the mission ; but, like many other ambassadors, I hesitated when the time came to discharge my trust. For Jack was like those Oriental Bashaws who cut off the heads of messengers that bring uncomfortable tidings. First, I thought it would be best to give the letter to him at Deptford, so that, if he was moved by pity, or by love, he might go straight to the poor girl and offer her consolation. But I had promised to give it the very next day. Therefore, I plucked up courage, and made my way to his lodgings, the letter in my pocket, knowing full well that he would take my interference ill, being too masterful to brook counsel, advice, or admonition from anyone, unless it came as an order from a superior officer.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when I reached his lodging in Ryder Street. He was sitting wrapped in a sheet, while the barber was finishing his hair with the powder puff. On the table stood his morning chocolate and cream.

'Ho!' he cried. 'Here is the Prince of Painters. Art come to paint me a portrait, Luke?' (N.B.—I did paint his portrait, and have it still, a speaking likeness, and a better piece of work I never did.) 'Wait a moment, my hearty, till this lubber hath finished the top dressing.'

Presently the man finished, and removed the sheet, showing beneath it a full-dress Lieutenant's uniform—to my mind the blue of the Navy is far more becoming to a handsome man than the scarlet of the Army. Just as he rose from the barber's hands, the man still standing before him, the implements of the trade in his hand and I beside him—I heard a rustling of petticoats outside, and the door was opened by a lady. She was wrapped from head to foot in a hood, and wore a domino.

'Madam!' said Jack, bowing low.

The lady removed her domino, and laughed, and threw off her hood. Truly a most beautiful creature she was, and most richly dressed. 'Twas the merriest, most roguish face that one ever saw, with dancing eyes and laughing lips. I ought to have known the face, because I had seen it several times; but I did not, because an actress dressed for a Queen or a Sultana seems to change her face as well as her frock. She was, indeed, an actress—very well known to the world, as you would acknowledge did I write down her name, which I shall not do, for many reasons.

'I have found my hero, then,' said the lady, 'in his own—cabin—or is it on his own quarter-deck? Are the decks cleared for action? Are you ready, Sir, to engage the enemy?'

'Alas! Madam,' said Jack, 'I haul down my colours, and give up my sword.'

He fell upon one knee and kissed the hand which the lady graciously extended to him. Now, observe that she took no kind of notice of

the barber or of myself, whom she mistook, doubtless, for an assistant or some other kind of tradesman. I mean that in what followed my presence was not the slightest restraint upon her.

'I am a rash creature,' she said, 'to imperil my reputation by visiting a Lieutenant of the King's Navy alone in the morning. Suppose I had been observed.'

'Madam'—Jack made her so fine a bow that I could not help thinking of the Jack who had come home in rags three years before—'could I desire a more delightful task than the defence of your reputation?'.

'I thank you, Lieutenant. But I have a readier defence in my hood and domino. A woman's reputation is quite safe, I assure you, so long as she is not seen. It is in this respect unlike so many gentlemen's honour, which is only safe so long as they are seen. I came not, however, for compliments. First of all, I came to say that I shall be alone this afternoon. You can visit me, if you please. Next, my Lord is coming to supper with me after the

theatre. He will presently call here himself, or send a letter, and will invite you to come with him. To oblige me, Lieutenant, you will come.'

'Madam,' said Jack, with a smiling face, 'you were born, sure, to make me the happiest of men.'

'The happiest of men!' she repeated, merrily laughing. 'Oh! what creatures we women would esteem ourselves, since, with such little trouble, we can make men happy! And how miserable are we that it takes so much more to make us happy! Heigho! You are made happy with a smile, or a kind word, or a hand to kiss, or permission to take supper with us—while we. . . . Oh! we know how little these things are worth. Therefore. . . . No, Sir, you have kissed my hand already.' At this point the barber, who had now gathered up his tools, retired from the room. I retreated to the window, and gazed upon the street, as if I was anxious not to listen. She, however, took no notice of my presence. 'Come this afternoon, then, and this evening, after you have seen me

from the front, you can join my Lord. But that is not all I had to say, oh, happiest of men!' She laughed again. 'This will make you indeed a happy man, if the roar of the cannons and the groans of wounded men are sweeter than the smiles of women.'

'Indeed, Madam, I cannot understand——'

'What I have now to tell will, I dare say, make a round dozen of women miserable, for my hero is a handsome hero. But not me, Sir. Oh, pray do not think that! An actress, everybody knows, hath no heart. She is but a toy, to be laughed at and played with, until the men find another which is newer, and hath less of the gilt rubbed off. Yet I shall be sorry, Jack—do your friends call you Jack?—though it is but the day before yesterday that I made your acquaintance, Sir.'

'Still, Madam,' he persisted, 'I know not——'

'This is a very fine coat, Jack,' she went on, laying her hand, covered with a white glove, upon his sleeve. 'I love the colour. 'Tis a new coat, too, so that 'twill be a pity to buy

another. Perhaps, however, this may be made to do, and methinks it will be greatly improved if we put a little lace upon the lapels and cuffs, and change the button for one with a crown instead of an anchor.'

'Madam!' He started, and changed countenance, because these additions mark the rank of Captain. 'Madam! Is it possible?'

'Why, Jack, when a handsome lad does a woman so great a service, and for all his reward wants nothing but to be sent away from her sight, I doubt whether she is not a fool for her pains if she help him—yet——' here she sighed. 'His Majesty's frigate "Calypso," the "Sapphire's" prize, is to be refitted without delay and commissioned. Go, take possession of your own quarter-deck, Captain Easterbrook. Perhaps the next lady whose jewels you save from robbers may make you an Admiral.' With this she curtseyed, so as to sweep the ground, as they are wont to do upon the stage.

'Oh! Madam,' he cried, 'how can I show my gratitude?'

'You will not set sail for a week or two

yet, I suppose. Come to see me as often as you please. To my brave defender I am always at home.'

She held out her hand, but Jack did not, as I expected, stoop to kiss it. On the contrary, he disregarded it altogether, and caught her in his arms, kissing her lips and cheeks. I looked to see her resent this familiarity with the greatest show of displeasure, for here was no simple girl of the lower sort, like poor Bess, but a very grand lady indeed, who, for all she was an actress, had all the noblemen of London at her feet. But, to my astonishment, she only laughed, and gently pushed him from her.

'Jack,' she said, 'thou hast truly a conquering way. Let me go, Sir!'

She laughed again, in her merry, saucy way; put on her domino, pulled the hood over her head, and suffered Jack to conduct her to her chair, which waited without.

'Hang it, Luke!' cried Jack, when he came back. 'I forgot that thou wast here; and I dare swear Madam never saw thee. Must I never kiss a pretty woman but this

virtuous fellow must still be looking on, with open mouth?'

'Shall I tell Castilla, Jack?'—thinking of what might have happened had Bess been there.

'Why, in a kiss there is no harm, surely; therefore, there is no need to tell Castilla. If this news be true—and it must be true—Luke, thou art a Puritan. As for a simple kiss which is snatched, they like it, man. Every woman, except Castilla, who is a miracle of goodness, likes such kisses.'

'Who is the lady, Jack?'

'Why, she is a great actress; and the other night, by a lucky chance—I was going home at midnight—I heard a woman's scream and a trampling of feet. 'Twas but an attack upon a lady's chair by footpads, whom it was nothing to drive off without more trouble than to draw and to slash one of them across the face. Then I saw her safe to her lodgings. 'Tis a grateful creature.'

'She seems grateful,' I said. 'Do actresses often appoint commanders to His Majesty's ships?'

'No, Luke; no, my lad, they do not. These appointments are given according to merit, seniority, courage, seamanship, and patriotism. That is very well understood, and it is the reason why everybody is so contented who wears the King's uniform. But suppose that one of my Lords the Commissioners should take a particular interest in a certain lady, and suppose this lady should have eyes to see all these virtues combined in one man; and suppose she should be able further so to persuade his Lordship, who, we will again suppose, knows already something of this man. Confess, then, that it would be a lucky thing for this man were this lady to single him out for the favour of recommendation.'

'Truly, it would be lucky for him.'

'Captain of the "Calypso,"' he exclaimed. 'Why, have I done badly to command a frigate at twenty-four? What care I who appoints me so that I get my chance? Will the world know? Have I done anything dishonourable? My Lord hath already promised me promotion: I looked to be First Lieutenant perhaps—and

now. . . . Luke, my lad, I am so happy that I could e'en go back to Deptford and fight Aaron Fletcher again, as I did three years ago at Horn Fair.'

'Yes, Jack; I could wish in my heart that you would fight him again, if it were about the same woman.'

He changed countenance, but quickly recovered.

'Come lad,' he said, 'ease thy mind, which is full of something. Let me hear it.'

'Put out of your mind,' I said, 'Castilla and this actress and all women, except one. I have been asked by one whom you should remember to bring to you a certain letter, and to beg, first, that you will read it, and next, that you will, with your own hand, restore it to the owner.'

With this I took the letter from my pocket and gave it to him in its silk bag.

'Why,' he said, breaking into a laugh, as if the matter was not serious at all, 'this is my own letter. I wrote it, I remember, one afternoon, off Cape Finisterre—I remember the day

very well. Did the girl—Bess Westmoreland was her name—give it to thee, Luke? Oh! I remember—I was in love with her. A devilish fine girl she was, with eyes like sloes.'

He read the letter through. 'To think that I wrote that letter, and that she believed it! "Most beautiful woman in the world." . . . Fondest lover!" Oho! I wonder how many such letters are written aboard-ship the first week after sailing? As for this—why, Luke, you had better give it back to the girl, if she wishes to keep it. Tell her to show it to her friends as the work of a fool. Perhaps her new lover or her husband might like to have the letter. But, indeed, I think she had better burn the thing, in case of accidents. Husbands do not like, generally, to read such letters.'

'She has had no other lovers, Jack, on your account.'

'Pretty fool! Bid her waste good time no longer.'

'She will suffer no man to speak to her, saying that she belongs to you alone, and thinking you would come home to marry her.'

'I suppose,' said Jack, his face darkening, 'that the meddlesome old Apothecary is at the bottom of this foolishness?'

'And myself, too. Why, Jack, you solemnly placed her in my charge. You begged me to take care of her. You tattooed her name upon your arm. Look at your arm. What could we think? She has learned things for your sake, Jack—such as gentle manners, and to restrain her tongue, and to govern herself—generally, that is,' because I remembered the scene of yesterday. 'You would not know her again.'

'Well, Luke, she has therefore been so far kept out of mischief, which is good for every girl. And this is a wicked world, and seaports are full of traps for girls. Tell her, however, that now she had better lose no time in looking for a husband in her own station. The fellow Aaron Fletcher would, perhaps, make a good husband, provided he kept decently sober.'

'Do not blame Mr. Brinjes. He hath warned her continually that sailors go away

and break their promises. But will you see her, Jack?'

'No. What the devil would be the use of my seeing her?'

I told him how she had put on her best, and gone to wait for him at the Apothecary's, and there waited for three long days. But he was not softened a whit.

'It is their foolish way,' he said. 'We say fond things and promise whatever will please them, and they believe it all. Why they believe the nonsense, the Lord knows. As for the men who say it, and make the promises, they believe it too, I dare say, at the time. 'Tis pretty, too, to see them purr and coo whatever extravagances you tell them. I remember now'—but here he stopped short in his recollections.

'Jack,' I said, 'will you pull up your sleeve, and show me your arm?'

He laughed, and obeyed. It was his left arm, and, as we know, it was tattooed all over with the once-loved name of Bess.

''Tis like the arm of any fo'k'sle tar,' he said. 'What was I, in these days, better? Yet,

lad, the name hath no longer any meaning to my eyes.'

'Meaning or not,' I insisted, 'will you give her the letter with your own hand? Jack, only let her tell you what is in her mind. That is a small thing to do.'

'It would be more cruel than to refuse to see her at all. Trust me, if this girl gives trouble I shall know how to deal with her. If you have any regard for her, bid her spoil her market no longer, and put maggots out of her head. She would marry me, would she? Kind soul, I thank her for it with all my heart. She would marry me, would she? I will tell thee a thing, my lad, which thou wilt never find out for thyself with all thy paint-brushes—there is no woman in the world more hateful to a man than a woman whom he hath once loved and now loves no longer. It is like coming back to a half-finished banquet when the dishes are cold and the wine is stale. Yet the foolish women believe that once in love, always in love. Better she should learn the truth at once, and so an end.'

He gave me back the letter, and would say no more upon the subject. But he said I must make a picture of him before he went away, and he would be painted in the new uniform, which he would order immediately; and I must go instantly and tell Castilla of his good fortune. Thus was I made a go-between, first to one and then to the other.

'And now, Luke, my fortune is made, if I am only moderately lucky. He who is Captain at twenty-four may well be Rear-Admiral at thirty, and command a fleet at thirty-five; at forty he is certainly a Knight, and perhaps a Viscount; and at seventy he lies in Westminster Abbey. What could I hope for better,' he asked, glowing with the joy and elation of his appointment, 'than to command a frigate, easy to handle, swift to sail? Why, it will be the "Tartar" over again in the Captain's cabin instead of the ward-room. That was warm work; but I hope to show warmer work still. God knows, Luke,' he said, earnestly, 'I say it not in boastfulness, I can handle a ship as well as the best man afloat,

and I can take her into action, I promise you, as bravely.'

So he talked; thinking no more at the time of the actress, or of Castilla, or of Bess, for the thought of any ship was enough to turn his mind from a woman, though he so easily fell in love with a pretty girl. And while he was thus talking of his promotion, and the things he hoped to do with his vessel, there drove to the house a chariot, with footmen, and gold panels, very splendid, and two gentlemen got down. They came to visit Jack. One of them was a man no longer young, yet erect and tall, with aquiline nose and proud eyes. He wore a satin coat, with a sash, and a star blazing with diamonds. The other was in the uniform of the Army.

Jack sprang to his feet, and bowed to the ground. 'My Lord,' he said, 'this is an extraordinary honour. Indeed, I could never have expected it.'

'I have come, young gentleman,' said his Lordship, speaking slowly and with the dignity

which became his rank, 'to tender you my thanks for the service which you performed the night before last to a certain lady.'

'My services, my Lord, were trifling, though, fortunately, opportune.'

'Had it not been for your assistance the lady would have lost the jewels which she had worn at the theatre. What other loss or insult she escaped, I know not. I learn that, at her request, you have already paid a visit upon her.'

'At her request, my Lord, I had that honour yesterday afternoon.'

'Believe me, Sir, that in return for such a service there is nothing that I can refuse you.' Jack bowed again very low. 'And since nothing will please you so much as to go back as quickly as possible to the fighting——'

'Nothing so much, my Lord.'

'Then you must go. Your name, I find, is already favourably known. I have therefore the pleasure of promoting for the sake of merit alone, which is not always possible for a Commissioner. You are promoted, Sir, to the

command of the "Calypso," the "Sapphire's" prize.'

'My Lord,' said Jack, again bowing low, 'I have no words, indeed, to express my gratitude for this great, this unexpected, and undeserved favour.' Looking on from the corner of the room, beside the window, I confess I could not help thinking that it would be best for Madam to say nothing about that salute upon her lips.

'Then,' said his Lordship, 'no more need be said.' He rose, and added, smiling, 'Since you will have to go back in a few days to salt junk and pea-soup, Captain, make the most of your time ashore. There will be a supper after the play this evening. I will, if you please to honour me with your company, carry you thither in my coach.'

'I am honoured tó be one of your Lordship's guests,' said Jack.

'A rolling deck, a wet cabin, the smell of tar everywhere, great sea-boots, the waves flying over the ship, the enemy pitching cannon-balls on board—this is what you like,

Captain Easterbrook. Well, Sir, you will have plenty of it, for there will be a long war, if all I hear is true. I shall see you, then, this evening. Come, Colonel.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE APOTHECARY DID HIS BEST.

'TELL her plainly,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'what he said, and how he looked while he said it. Spare her in nothing; so will she the more quickly come to a right mind. What? Didst ever see a surgeon take off a man's leg? Doth he chop here a cantle, and there a snippet, for fear of causing pain? Not he! He ties his bandages and takes his saw, and in five minutes off goes leg; and, though the man may bellow, yet his life is saved.'

There was little hope in her face when I went in to her; the trouble of it made my heart bleed. To think that a woman should still so much love a man who had thrown her away with as little thought as one throws away the

rind of an apple. . . . I thought she would have hated him. But no; at a word, she would have arisen to follow and obey him like a slave.

'Bess,' I said, 'be brave.'

'Where is he?'

'He is in London, at his lodgings.'

'Did you give him the letter?'

'I did. He sent it back to you. Here it is. Courage, Bess. No man is worth so much crying over. It is as I told you before. He loves you no longer. When he thinks of the past, he wonders at himself. When he remembers how much he was once in love, he laughs.'

'Doth he laugh? Oh! Luke, can he laugh?' It was wonderful to her that the thing which destroyed all her happiness could be to him only the cause of laughter.

'Bess, my dear, I am grieved to the soul that I must tell you this. Alas! he laughs. He can never love you any more. Forget him, therefore. Put him out of your thoughts.'

'He laughs at the girl to whom he wrote

this letter—oh! this dear letter. Why doth he laugh? I cannot laugh, because I loved him.'

She rose, and sighed heavily. 'Well,' she said, 'there needs no more, Luke. I have lost my sweetheart. That matters nothing, does it? Thousands of poor women lose their sweethearts every year, in action and in shipwreck. No one pays heed to the women. What matters one more woman? Oh! I would to God that he was lying dead at the bottom of the sea; and I—and I—and I——' She rushed from the room with distraction in her looks.

There was great rejoicing at the Admiral's, whither I carried the glad news of Jack's promotion. Castilla attributed it entirely to the extraordinary discernment of his Lordship, who deserved, she thought, the highest credit for discovering Jack's real ability and courage, so that he should be promoted, over hundreds of heads, to the command of a frigate, before he was four-and-twenty years of age. Truly, it makes one no happier to be wiser, and Castilla knew nothing about the great lady of Drury

Lane. Heaven forbid that she should learn anything about that ravished kiss!

The day was marked at the Club in the usual manner—viz., by an extra bowl of punch; and I sat beside the Admiral and told the company how his Lordship, in a splendid satin coat, with a red sash and a diamond star, had condescended in person to inform this fortunate young Commander of his promotion. But you may be sure that I told nothing about the actress, even to the Admiral, who marvelled greatly at the boy's success, and wondered, being wise by experience, by whose private interest he had been promoted.

But the woman who ought most to have rejoiced was wandering all night long, in wind and rain, over the desolate moor called Blackheath, raging and despairing because the man who once loved her so tenderly had now forgotten her, and laughed to think that he could ever have thought he loved her. In the morning she came back, mud-stained and draggled, hollow-eyed and wan of cheek, to the parlour behind the Apothecary's shop; and here, pre-

sently, she fell asleep, being wholly spent with suffering and fatigue.

Now, when Mr. Brinjes came from his shop and saw her thus asleep and so pale of cheek, he was moved with compassion, and resolved, though he had not visited London for twenty years, that he would himself try to move the hard heart of her lover. Accordingly, he put off his workday clothes, and reached down his great wig and the coat in which he sat at the Club (both of which belonged to the early years of George I.), and so, fully persuaded that he was dressed quite in the modern fashion of a Court physician, he took oars for Hungerford Stairs, whence he walked to Ryder Street.

On the way, the boys shouted at him, for he cut the queerest figure, his velvet coat being so old that it had turned green in places, his lace in rags, his old-fashioned wig unkempt and shabby. But he walked briskly, careless of the boys, and carried his gold-headed stick with an air of majesty.

'Jack,' he said, dropping into a chair, 'thou art now, I hear, a Captain. Give me a glass of

brandy—'tis a long journey from Deptford—and I will drink to thy good-luck. So—this is a pretty, commodious lodging, Jack. I passed some fine women on the way from Hungerford Stairs. Have a care, my boy. Do not suffer any of the fine birds to bring their fine feathers here; else it may cost thee dear. Be content with some honest wench who will love thee and not try to rob and plunder all the prize-money.'

'Well, Mr. Brinjes'—Jack was not, I think, best pleased to see the old man at his lodgings, and more than suspected the errand on which he came—'can I be of any service to my old friend?'

'That depends, Jack—that depends. The greatest service you could do for me would be not to forget old friends.'

'Indeed, I have forgotten no old friends.'

'Or old sweethearts?'

'Why, as for old sweethearts, my old friend, they may go on so long as to become stale. This, you have often assured me as matter of your own experience.'

'It is quite true,' replied the Rover, who had not looked to have his own maxims thrown in his face; 'it is quite true, I say, that woman is by nature a jealous creature—the nearer to nature you get the more jealous you will find her. Something of the tigress in every one. Wherefore Bess, who is as passionate as a negro woman, is more jealous, I dare say, than a London fine lady, who hath not the heart to be greatly jealous. Also, a woman can never be made to understand such a simple thing as that she ought to be contented with the half-share of a man, or the quarter-share, or even a short six months of his life ashore. Nor doth she ever perceive when the time arrives that she should cheerfully make way for another. Yet—poor Bess! I am sorry for the wench.'

'In South America,' said Jack, talking in the same strain, 'where they smoke the cigarro, one that hath been half-smoked and thrown away is nauseous if it be taken up and lighted again.'

'It is so,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'Everyone who

hath been in Guayaquil, which is nigh unto South America, knows that it is so.'

'Wherefore,' said Jack; but left the conclusions to be drawn by the philosopher.

'The thing is so,' Mr. Brinjes repeated. 'Jack, when thy first letter came I knew that the fit was too hot to last. And when no more came I understood very well what had happened. For my own part, I never loved any woman more than four-and-twenty hours after leaving port. Why, I have seen sailors marrying the day before they sailed, and yet coming on board unconcerned. This forgetfulness is a special gift of Providence, intended for sailors alone. But as for Bess, while you thought no more upon her, she had that letter wrapped in a silken bag, and hung about her neck; and every day she kissed and hugged it, thinking—poor, fond soul! women are fools, yet we needs must feel pity for them!—that the writer, like herself, would never change. She began to learn things for her lover's sake; she learned to read and write; she watched the ladies in church to see how they dress, and

how they carry themselves; she made Luke teach her some of their finickin', delicate ways, which don't go down with a sea-pie and black beer, such as you used to love in the days before your breeches were white, and your stockings of silk, and while your buttons carried a simple anchor. Moreover, Bess would no longer consort with her old friends, and would suffer none of the men so much as to have speech with her. And she made Luke tell her what words and sayings of hers would offend the ears of gentlewomen. In short, there she is, my lad, a woman ready for you; as to manners, so far as I understand the matter, as fine as a countess; as to good looks, not a countess of them all can touch her; as to figure—Lord! a finer figure was never made; as to temper, a noble temper, my lad, quick and ready to flame up. What? One that will keep her husband alive, I warrant, and stirring. Why, Jack, we talked of a half-burned cigarro. This one is not yet even lighted. Try it again, dear lad. 'Tis made, I swear, from the finest leaf of Virginia. In South America they have

none such. As for truth and constancy, I will answer for them with my life : and for affection —why, 'tis nothing less than a madness she hath for thee. Come, what want you with fine ladies? They will but play with you when you are ashore, and forget you when you are at sea, while, as for Bess, Bess will keep your house while you are away, and when you come home, she shall be the tenderest wife in the world and like a faithful slave for service. What? You would say that by birth she is below the rank of a Commander? Jack, hark ye!'—here he whispered, as if imparting a great secret—'a beautiful woman hath no rank. There must be rank for men, otherwise there would be no discipline on board the ship. Rank was invented for that purpose; and the pretence is necessary for order's sake, whether we call each other Duke, Earl, and noble Lord, or Captain, Lieutenant, and Master. Yet it is, even with men, nothing but pretence at bottom. But for women there is no rank at all, whatever they may themselves pretend. Which is proved, Jack, by the fact that great men do

constantly fall in love with women of the meanest origin, as witness Charles II. and Nelly Gwynne. You may put Bess upon a throne, and, my word, there is not a Queen among them all would outshine her black eyes and beauteous face. Whereas you will never see a woman of gentle birth fall in love with a clown. Rank is for the ugly women, to console themselves withal, by walking in front of each other. Give me another tot of brandy, Jack; and think of her again, I say. Why, I can never get out of my mind that we shall all three—you and Bess and I—we shall all three sail together across the broad Pacific to pick up my treasure, and to burn the town of Guayaquil, where they made me a slave. I cannot die until that town is burned.'

'I know nothing,' said Jack, 'about your dreams. But, for the rest, you are too late, Mr. Brinjes. I have forgotten the girl. All the past foolishness is over and finished.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Brinjes, looking at him as a physician when he feels the pulse, 'yes': he spoke slowly and sadly, 'I now perceive plainly

that it is all over. The symptoms are clear. Your eyes warm no more at the thought of the girl. Her chance is gone. The poor child hath had her time. Well—I shall go home again. Pray Heaven, my assistant hath not already poisoned a customer or two. Jack, keep out of her way. There will be trouble yet.'

'Why, Mr. Brinjes,' he laughed, 'you do not think that I am afraid of a woman?'

'Nay—I said not that. But—well—we shall have trouble yet. And for these Southern Seas, sure I am that I shall see them again before I die.'

So the Apothecary went away, having done what he could, and having failed.

'We sailors,' said Jack to me presently, 'are great fools in our love for taverns and drinking bouts and low company, so that those are right who represent us as so many dull dogs who have no manners, and can do nothing ashore but drink about. Why, when I came home, three years ago, the Gun Tavern was the height of civilisation, the Apothecary's

dirty parlour was the abode of politeness, and poor Bess was the finest lady in the land.'

'We are mostly such mere tarpaulins,' he continued, after a space, 'that landsmen do well to despise us, though we fight their battles for them, and care not how we are treated, nor how many hundreds they pass over when they make appointments. Then we fall to cursing the service, instead of our own common habits. There was on board the "Tartar" one of the lieutenants (he is now dead) who was a gentleman—I mean by taste and education, as well as by birth—who sometimes talked with me, saying "that 'twas a pity a lad of my appearance and figure (which he flattered) should not study polite manners for the sake of my own advancement, because, with a little trouble, I might certainly attract attention in high places, and so receive promotion." In this he was partly right, though I now find that great men think they can pay for the service of flattery in promises, as a merchant pays for goods with a piece of paper. But there is a

difference, because, if the merchant do not redeem his promise when the day comes, he is dishonoured; whereas if a nobleman doth not redeem his promise, no one throws the fact in his teeth. And if I had not been so lucky as to rescue a certain friend of my Lord, I doubt whether I should have got any appointment, to say nothing of promotion.

'But, lad, consider. Here I live among the best; I am received at a great man's table; I sit in the coffee-house among the wits or the fops, as I please; I go to the theatre, to Ranelagh, and to Vauxhall; there is the gaming-table, if I choose to risk a few pieces; if I am ever disposed for a quiet evening, there is the society of Castilla, the sweetest girl in the world; if for a sprightly party, there are the suppers of my friend—my patron, if you please—and this actress. Think you that after these things I can go back to Mr. Brinjes' stinking parlour, and the Penman's daughter? She may be as beautiful as he says—I care not. She is certain to have coarse hands, rude

speech, and plain manners. You might as soon expect me to go back to the cockpit, and to mess again with the midshipmen, the volunteers, and the surgeon's mates!'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN INTERESTING CASE.

WHAT would be done next I knew not, yet feared something desperate, the case lying (on the one hand) between a woman driven well-nigh mad with love and disappointment, and (on the other) a man of great determination, inflexible to tears and entreaties, and, besides, one who now regarded this poor girl, as he himself confessed, with as much loathing as he had once felt love. I have read in some book of travels that there are certain hot fountains in Iceland which burst forth from time to time with incredible force, and either scald to death those upon whom they chance to play, or, by the ground sinking beneath their footsteps, do suddenly engulf them. We

were now—that is, Mr. Brinjes and myself, who alone knew what was threatening—like unto those who walk upon ground where these fountains break out; for we knew not what ruin might fall upon us at any moment, caused by the hand of a desperate woman.

No one knows the trouble the poor girl gave us at this time, with her changing moods, her fits, and her despair. For sometimes she would sit for many hours swinging her body backwards and forwards, tearing a ribbon or a handkerchief with her teeth; sometimes she would sit quite still, her eyes fixed and glowering; then she would suddenly spring to her feet, and cry aloud that she could bear it no longer; sometimes she would threaten death and murder to her false lover, and to any woman who should dare to take him from her; sometimes she would rush from the room and wander away, till she was forced to come back for weariness; and sometimes she would become gentle again, acknowledge her wilfulness, and beg forgiveness for her bad temper and her wild words. But these occasions were

rare. She spent the whole day in Mr. Brinjes' house—that is, when she was not in one of her restless moods, wandering over Blackheath, or farther a-field, in the woods and fields of Eltham or Norwood. More than once she spent the whole night out, returning in the morning spent with fatigue, her fury only appeased for a time by the weakness of her body. As for her father, she neglected him altogether, so that the poor man was now obliged to provide his own meals, sweep and keep clean his room, and make his own bed. 'Yet,' he said, 'I dare not say a word in remonstrance or rebuke, so terrible is her temper, in which she now seems to surpass her mother, though I confess she doth not beat me over the head with the frying-pan, as my wife was wont to do. Mr. Brinjes, before whom I have laid the case, advises patience. Well, Mr. Luke, I am a patient man. Of that I am very sure. I have been patient all my life—when I was a boy and the stronger boys hectored it over me; and when I was a 'prentice, and my master half-starved me; when I was a married man

and my wife scratched, beat, and cuffed me daily; and now when my daughter is grown up. It is not recorded of the Patriarch Job that his wives and daughters were thus ungoverned.'

Sometimes she would speak of her wrongs, and mostly she was grieved because Jack laughed at her.

'If he were dead,' she cried, 'I could weep for him all the days of my life, thinking he loved me to the end. Oh! I am a fool to care for such a man or to cry over him. He laughs at me. I am a fool. He laughs at me. Why did I not forget him the moment his ship was out of sight, and take another sweetheart?'

'Pity,' said Mr. Brinjes, shaking his head. 'A thousand pities you did not.'

'Hold your tongue!' she turned on him fiercely. 'How dare you speak? You were all in league to mock at me. Why, 'twas thus you beguiled the poor black negro girls, you and your pirate crew. And then you laughed at them.'

'Faith!' said Mr. Brinjes, 'if a man

desert a black girl she generally murders him for it.'

She looked at him strangely, and rushed away, saying nothing.

'I am sorry,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'that I told her about the negress's revenge, for she is now capable of everything; and perhaps she will go away and put a knife into his heart.' This he said calmly, as if murder was too common a thing to surprise him. 'There was once a girl —'twas at Providence—whose lover—a smart fellow, too, and one of our crew—deceived her. What did she do? Pretended to forgive him; passed the thing over; treated it as a joke, and played the loving sweetheart to the life, laughing and singing while she served up the poisoned meat that was to kill him. She put in it the herb stramonium, which there grows wild; and the women know its properties very well. She laughed the louder afterwards, while he twisted and rolled on the ground and bellowed in his agony. The men burned her alive for it, because this was an example that might affect them all; but she cared

nothing for the torture; for she had her revenge; and, whatever was done to her afterwards, nothing would hurt her, so long as she could think of that. Look you, Bess is such another as that negro girl. She is as passionate and she is as jealous. There has been murder in her mind ever since Jack came home. I have read the thought in her eyes, and now I have put it into words for her. Trouble will come.'

It was not this crime that I feared, because our women know not, happily, the use of poisons; and the worst among them shrink from taking life. But I feared that she might rashly and in despair kill herself; or commit some act of violence towards Castilla, if she suspected that Jack was paying her attentions; or that she might lose her reason altogether. And indeed, in those days, I am sure that she was partly mad.

You shall learn what she did.

First, she would hear from her former lover's own lips the sentence of her dismissal. She would read her fate in his eyes. There-

fore, one morning, without informing anyone of her intention, she took boat and was carried up the river, and so made her way to his lodging in Ryder Street. No neglect of dress could hide the girl's wonderful beauty, but it was unfortunate, the Captain being now daily in the society of ladies who omit no point in their attire which may help to enhance their charms, that she came to him in a common stuff frock, that in which she was accustomed to do the housework, and a plain straw hat, so that she looked exactly what she was, the daughter of some tradesman of humble station. This, I say, was unlucky for her. Another unlucky thing was that the Captain was not alone in his lodging; and it shamed him that a girl, so common in her dress and appearance, should thus present herself and call him Jack, and remind him of his broken vows. You will expect, when you hear that Bess found a lady in the room, a scene of mad and violent jealousy. But nothing of the kind happened. And yet the situation was one which might very well have caused a jealous woman to fly

out, for the lady, who was none other than the Drury Lane actress, was sitting in a chair, and Jack was standing over her. She was looking up at him with her merry laughing eyes, her hair curled over her forehead, and her face as if it was always and naturally bright and joyous (this thing one constantly sees in women who play upon the stage, though I know not why they should be happier than other folk). Her hood, in which she had been wrapped, and her domino, lay upon the table, and she was dressed most daintily in some flowered silk, with laced petticoat and kid gloves. Now, like a true woman, Bess no sooner saw this finely-dressed lady than she began to think with shame of her own common frock, her hair so rough, and her coarse hands, and to wish that she had put on her best before she left home. I know not what they were talking about, but though the lady was merry, Jack was serious; to be sure he never passed jests with women, and was not even as a boy over fond of laughing with girls; perhaps—some philosopher hath remarked—women like best

the men who treat them seriously, and as if every interview with them gave birth to what the French call a grand passion.

At sight, however, of Bess as she stood in the open doorway, Jack started and stepped forward as if to protect his visitor, with a round quarter-deck oath.

'Oh! my poor ears!' cried the actress, "are we on board ship already?'

Then she marked the face of the woman at the open door, and there was something in her eyes and attitude which made her silent. There is a kind of despair which makes itself felt even by the lightest. This woman she saw had a pale face and large black eyes, which were fixed, steadfastly and piteously, upon the Captain.

'Why do you come here?' asked Jack.

'I came to see you. Oh! Jack!' she gasped, and caught at her heart.

'I have sent you an answer already.'

'I have come to hear your answer from your own lips,' she replied, with trembling voice.

'Come, Bess,' he said coldly, but not unkindly, 'you are a foolish girl; the past is gone. We cannot bring back again what has been. Forget it——and me. And go away. This is no place for you.'

'Forget it? You think I can forget? Have you forgotten, Jack; tell me, have you forgotten?' She clasped her hands and threw them out in a gesture of pain and trouble. 'Oh! have you forgotten—you?'

'I have quite forgotten,' he replied. 'Everything has clean gone out of my mind,' but, of course, his very words betrayed his memory. 'Of course, I remember who you are. Your father taught me arithmetic and writing. You are Bess Westmoreland. We used to play together when we were children. Then I went away to sea, and I remember nothing more.'

'Nothing more,' she murmured. 'Oh! he remembers nothing more. Oh! is it possible? Can he forget?'

The actress looked on with grave attention. She could read the story without being told.

Partly, she was studying a delineation of the passion of disappointed love, rendered better than anything she had ever seen upon the stage; partly, she was filled with pity. An ordinary gentlewoman would have felt, as Castilla feels, that such a girl has no business to suppose that a gentleman can love her, the thing being, in her opinion, contrary to Nature. But the actress knew better. Besides, she understood, which ordinary gentlewomen do not, that beauty is not altogether a matter of dress. A woman who is always dressing herself in different fashions knows that very well.

'If you wish,' Jack went on, 'I will tell you something more that I remember. But you had better not ask me to tell you that. Best to go away now, and before harder things are said.'

'There can be no harder things said. Tell me what you please.'

'I remember a young girl and a boy. The boy had been six years at sea and among savages, and knew not one woman from another. So he thought he was in love with

the girl, who was no proper match for him. And when he had been at sea again for six weeks, of course he had clean forgotten her.'

'And now you have returned, Jack'—she dragged off her hat, and her beautiful black hair fell in long curls upon her shoulders—'look upon me. Am I less beautiful than I was? You, woman'—she turned fiercely upon the actress—'tell me, you, are you in love with him? No: I see it in your eyes; you do not love him. Then you will speak the truth, and perhaps you will pity me. Tell me, then, am I beautiful?'

'You are a very beautiful girl, indeed,' said the Queen of Drury Lane. 'Upon the boards you would be a dangerous rival. Your hair and eyes are splendid; your shape is faultless. Unfortunately, you have not learned to dress.'

'You hear, Jack, what this lady, who is not in love with you, says of me. I have learned things, too, since you went away. I am no longer so plain and rustic, and—— Oh! Jack——' She threw herself at his feet, regardless of the other woman. She must

have known that it was a useless humiliation, yet perhaps she was resolved to drink the cup to the dregs. 'Jack, look upon my name printed upon thy arm; think of my hair tied about thy wrist; think of all thy promises! Jack, think of everything. Oh! Jack, be not so cruel!'

Alas! his face was hard and cruel. As she held up her arms in this humility, he made as if he would push her from him, and in his eyes, once so soft to her and full of love, she read now scorn and loathing.

'Go!' he said. 'You have had my answer.'

Then she rose meekly, and drew from her pocket certain presents he had given her—a necklace of red coral, a packet of ribbons, a roll of lace, the gloves, a broken sixpence, and laid them on the table.

'You shall have again,' she said, 'all that you have ever given me, except one thing. I keep your letter, and your promise. That I will never give you back so long as I live. I know not yet what I shall do. . . . I know not——' She grew giddy, and looked as if

she would fall, but presently recovered, and without another word she left the room.

'Are there many such girls in love with you, Captain Easterbrook?' asked the actress. There were tears in her eyes, but she put up her handkerchief. 'Are there many such in the world, I wonder? They come not to this end of town. Do you write the names of all the women you love upon your arms? Then they will be a pretty sight for a jealous wife, Jack, when you marry.'

'Let her go.' He swept the poor trifles, mementoes of bygone love, upon the floor. 'Let us talk of something else.'

'She is a very beautiful woman,' the actress continued, disregarding his words. 'There is no woman now upon the boards who would better become the part of a queen; and most certainly none who could better act the part she has just played. 'Twas a moving situation, Captain, though it moved you not. I wonder how many women's hearts thou hast broken, Jack?'

'Why, if we come to questions, I wonder

how many men would like to make love to you, fair lady?'

'Captain Easterbrook, it cannot escape your penetration that there is not a pretty woman in the world to whom all men would not willingly make love, if they could. As for constancy, they laugh at it; and promises they despise; they trample upon the hearts of the foolish women who love them; and they consider jealousy in a woman a thing past comprehension.' She laughed, but her eyes were not so merry as when Bess opened the door. 'Well—I am resolved not to have my heart broken, because I have but one, and if it chance to be broken, I doubt if I could piece it together again. Therefore, my gallant Captain, my brave Jack, I doubt whether it were wise of me to come here any more. You may, if you please, come to my suppers, to meet my Lord and his friends. Look not so glum, Captain. Well, perhaps I may see thee once more before thy ship sails. If I do, promise to pretend a little love for this unhappy love-sick nymph! She is a sea-nymph, I take it—one

of those whom the poets call Naiads. Comfort her poor heart a little, and perhaps when thou art gone she may very likely console herself. Alas! always one loves and one is loved.'

'I loved her once. Can she expect——'

'Women are such fond creatures, Captain Easterbrook, that they are not even contented to be a toy for a month or two. As for me, I make men my toys, and as for my heart, it is still mine own. Adieu, thou conqueror of women's hearts and compeller of women's tears. But, Jack'—she laid her hand upon his arm—'look that this poor distracted creature doth not do a mischief to thee or to someone. There was madness in her eyes. I now know how the passion of jealousy should be rendered. It is to stand so, and to look so; and thus to use the hands.' She lost her own face, and became Bess, so clever was she at impersonation, and, in dumb show, went through the pantomime of a scorned and jealous woman. Then she put on her domino, took her hood, and ran downstairs.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW CASTILLA WAS BETROTHED.

I DO not think there is anything in this history more distasteful to Castilla than a certain episode in it, which one cannot choose but narrate. To omit the incident would be the concealment of a thing which clearly shows the disposition of our hero at this juncture of his affairs, when all seemed prosperous with him, but when his fate was already sealed, and destruction about to fall upon him.

Castilla reproaches me with concealing from the Admiral and her mother, first, the previous engagement with Bess, and, next, the acquaintance of the Captain with the actress, of whom mention has been made; and declares that, if the Admiral had known it, he would have for-

bidden the house to so gay a Lothario. Castilla's general opinion as to her father's character is doubtless correct; but as to her father's conduct under certain circumstances, I prefer my own judgment. Certain I am that if the Admiral (now in Abraham's bosom) had known both these facts—indeed, I am sure that he knew a good deal of the first—he would not on that account have shut Jack out of the house, nor would he have forbidden him to pay his addresses to Castilla.

'As for me,' she still says, indignant, even after so many years, 'had I suspected the things which you very well knew at the time, Sir, I should have spurned his proposals. I have now forgiven him, because, poor boy! he was punished for his weakness in the matter of that witch and her adviser, the Apothecary, whom I believe to have been sold to the Devil! I forgive him freely, and, you know, Luke, that I have long since forgiven you for your part in the deception. But there are things which can never be forgotten, though they be forgiven.'

As for my own conduct in the business, I

know not why I should have told the Admiral, or Castilla either, that a celebrated actress and toast had been rescued from footpads by Jack Easterbrook; that he supped at her house, in company with other gentlemen; and that she visited him twice, to my knowledge, in his own lodging, the first time in order to communicate to him the news of his promotion, and the second time—I know not why. I was not a spy upon Jack; and, on reflection, I think that if the thing had to be done again I should behave exactly in the same manner.

Nor do I know why I should have warned Castilla about the old love affair. It was over, and finished. Surely a woman would not be jealous because a lad of nineteen had made an imprudent promise which he afterwards broke, or because he then fell in love with, and afterwards ceased to love, a certain girl, whether below or above his own rank in life? To be sure, I was certain that some trouble would happen, though of what nature I knew not.

Suffice it to say, therefore, that I heard no

more about the actress, but that Jack came often, in those weeks between his appointment and his sailing orders, to the Admiral's, and that he made no secret to me of his passion for Castilla. Also, he took the ladies to various fashionable places of resort which they had never before seen, because there was no one to take them. Thus, we went one evening to Ranelagh, where there was a very pretty concert in the round room, with dancing afterwards, and a great crowd of ladies beautifully dressed, though none prettier than Castilla, to my simple taste. And on another evening we went to Drury Lane, where the actress, Jack's friend, was playing the principal part; and a more merry, light-hearted creature one never beheld upon the stage. I observed that Jack showed no sign of any acquaintance with her, but discussed her performance as a stranger might be expected to do, calling her pretty well as to looks, but then, she was painted up; while as for beauty, give him blue eyes and light hair, at which Castilla blushed. And so home by moonlight, when the watermen are mostly gone

to bed, and the river is comparatively quiet. Castilla sat beside Jack in the boat, and I believe he held her hand.

And, on the day after the play, the Admiral was asked and gave his consent to his daughter's engagement with Jack. He gave it with a livelier satisfaction, he said, than he had felt in any previous event of his life. 'Castilla,' he said, 'this is the greatest day of thy life. For thou art promised to the most gallant officer in the King's Navy. I say, to the bravest and the comeliest lad, and to the best heart, though he shirks the bottle and leaves me to finish it. If thou art not proud of him, thou art no daughter of mine.'

'Indeed, sir,' said Castilla, 'I am very proud of him.'

Jack threw his arms round her, and kissed her on both cheeks, and on the forehead, and on her lips.

I say no more. Castilla declares, now, that she never really loved him, though she confesses that she was carried away by so much passion and by her admiration of his bravery.

Yet I know not. He was a masterful man, who compelled women to love him, and, as the actress said, he had a conquering way with him. I think that if events had turned out otherwise, Castilla would have become a loving, as well as an obedient, wife. But let that pass. They were engaged, and the club at the Sir John Falstaff had a roaring night, in which Mr. Brinjes heartily joined, because at his age 'twould have been a sin to suffer the fear of approaching disaster to stand between himself and a night of punch and singing and the telling of sea-stories.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW PHILADELPHY KEPT THE SECRET.

WHEN one reflects upon this time and upon the conduct of Jack Easterbrook, it seems as if at each successive step the unfortunate man advanced one step nearer to his own destruction. Surely, knowing the grief, the resentment, and the indignation which filled the heart of the woman he had cast aside, with no more consideration than if she had been a hedgerow weed, he might well have reflected before sending her intelligence which was certain to drive her into despair. But, such as he do never reflect.

Therefore, on the very day when he was affianced to Castilla, he took the surest steps to make Bess acquainted with this certain proof of

his desertion. For he led aside the old negro nurse, Philadelphy, and told her that he had a most important thing to communicate, and one which very much concerned her own happiness, and a thing which everybody would be anxious to know; but that it was a profound secret, and must be told to no one, and especially was not to be communicated to any person outside Madam's household.

'I know,' he said, 'that you desire nothing in the world so much as the happiness of your young mistress.'

That she assured him, truthfully, was the case.

'So that I am certain you will rejoice when I tell you the secret. Now, Philadelphy, what should you say if Miss Castilla had a lover?'

''Pends on de young gen'leman, sah.'

'So it does. You are always wise, Philadelphy. What should you say, then, if she was going to be married?'

''Pends on de young gen'leman, sah.'

'You are indeed a wonderful woman, Philadelphy. What should you think, then, if I

were going to be that happiest of mortals, Miss Castilla's husband?'

The old woman looked at him admiringly. Then she began to laugh. Negroes are easily tickled with laughter: they laugh if anyone is hurt; they laugh if misfortunes fall upon their friends; and when they are pleased they laugh: Philadelphy, therefore, laughed for satisfaction and joy, not, as Sarai of old laughed in derision.

'Is dat de troof, Massa Jack?'

'It is the truth, Philadelphy.'

'Ho! ho!' she laughed again. 'Berry fine lover for Miss Castil. Berry fine young man for my young mistress.'

'It is a secret, Philadelphy,' he told her again. 'No one knows it except Madam, and the Admiral, and Castilla, and me. You have been told first of all. That is a great honour for you. But it is a secret as yet. I am to go on board in a few days, and the Lord knows when I shall return. So while I am away do you take care of her, and put in, every now and again, a word for me—you understand?'

She understood very well, and without the

aid of the two guineas which he slipped into her hand, that she was to sing the praises of a certain young gentleman. She folded the money in the corner of her handkerchief, and nodded and laughed again. As a secret messenger, or go-between, I think Philadelphy would have had no equal. Her taste, as well as her genius, lay in this art; but, unfortunately, it was not called into practice, because Castilla had but two lovers, one of whom she lost in the manner you are going to hear, and the other she married without any necessity for a go-between at all.

'You understand,' Jack repeated, 'that it is a secret. You are not, therefore, on any account to tie up your head in your red turban, and to carry the news into the town. You must not think of telling the old fellows at the Trinity Hospital. You must not go to Mr. Skipworth, the Barber, with it; and if you tell Mr. Westmoreland, the Penman, or his daughter Bess, you will make me angry. I quite depend upon your secrecy, Philadelphy.'

The old woman nodded and laughed, and

laughed again, promising that nothing should drag the secret from her. But when the Captain left her, she hastened to tie her red handkerchief round her head, which was her way of preparing to sally forth from the house; and then she began to mutter with her lips. Next she sat down, and laughed again. While she was laughing, two of her fellow black servants came upon her; and, being of a quick and sympathetic mind, they sat down and laughed with her, all three rolling about, digging their hands into their sides, and laughing in each others' faces, while the tears ran down their cheeks. When they were quite tired of this exercise, they left off, and the two old men went away about their own business without so much as asking why she had set them off into this mirthful fit; and the old woman, setting her turban right, walked off slowly in the direction of the town.

She did, in fact, and as Jack fully expected she would do, everything that she had been carefully told not to do. First, she looked into the gateway of Trinity Hospital. On the sunny

side there walked half a dozen of the old men warming themselves. She exchanged a few words with them, admonishing them to keep the secret, and then went on her way. Now, there are no more ingrained gossips than these old almsmen, who have nothing to do all day long except to tell each other stories, for the most part old and well worn, and to retail news. Therefore, as soon as Philadelphy had gone, these veterans, one after the other, left the hospital and made their way, some to the Stairs, and some to the taverns in the town, and some to the Dockyard, spreading the news, for there was no officer in the King's Navy better known than Captain Easterbrook, whom all regarded as a Deptford man, and greatly respected for his courage and his gallant bearing. Moreover, he had among them all the reputation of being a lucky officer. He had gone through so much danger, and hitherto had so miraculously escaped from every kind of peril, that he must needs be a lucky officer to sail with. And now he was going to take command on board as fine a frigate, the French-built 'Calypso', as there was

afloat, and not a sailor but would have liked well to sail with him.

When she left the hospital, Philadelphy looked into the kitchen of St. Paul's Vicarage, just to whisper the news to the maids. Thence she went on her way to the Barber's, and, calling Mr. Skipworth to the door, she imparted the news to him, with many injunctions to profound secrecy, which he faithfully and joyfully promised, and kept his promise in the way common among barbers—namely, that he passed on the news in strict confidence and a whisper to every customer in turn who came to be shaved.

Philadelphy next crossed the street and looked in at the Penman's. Mr. Westmoreland was in the shop, writing a letter for one girl to her sweetheart, somewhere at sea, while another waited her turn. In the corner of the room, beside the fire, sat Bess, her hands folded in her lap, doing nothing and paying no heed to what went on. The girls disputed what should be said; the scribe listened, and from time to time put down a sentence, catching at

their meaning rather than taking down their words.

'Say I keep true and constant,' said one, 'though all the men in Deptford are asking me to give him up. Tell him that. Tell him I expect as much from him when he comes home —else, he shall see. And if he dares so much as to look at. . . .'

'I wouldn't tell him that,' said the other girl. 'Tell him that nobody in the town cares a button for him or even thinks about him but yourself. He'll think all the more of you for that. Don't never let him think you care a rope's-end whether he goes after the other women or not.'

Mr. Westmoreland went on writing while they talked. He civilised, so to speak, their letters for the ladies, taking out the threats, the ejaculations, the accusations, the protestations, and the profane words, whereby he certainly did much to strengthen and to sanctify the bond of affection between the sailor and his mistress, since a lover could not but be moved at receiving a letter so movingly

and so religiously expressed. It must surely be a great thing for a man to think of his sweetheart as a quiet, sweet-tempered, and well-conducted woman (as always appeared from these letters), capable of expressing the finest sentiments in the choicest language, and full of gentle piety. Pity it was that when the men came home their mistresses should always fail to talk and to behave up to the standard of their letters.

Without troubling herself about the girls, Philadelphy took a chair beside Bess, and began to whisper. Now, so carefully had Bess kept her secret that no one in the place knew a word about it except Aaron Fletcher, and, for reasons of his own, he spoke of it to none. Least of all did this old negro woman suspect it. She whispered what she had to say, and then, with a hundred nods and winks, used as signs of mystery and secrecy, she got up and went away.

Bess sat still awhile. The two girls finished their business with her father, and went away. Mr. Westmoreland looked timidly at his daughter.

'Bess, my dear,' he said.

She shook her head impatiently.

'Is there any chance that you will come round soon, my dear? I wouldn't hurry any woman's temper on my account, though I may say that it is a month and more since I have had any dinner.'

'If I had a knife in my hand this moment,' she cried, springing to her feet and tossing her arms in the air: 'if I had a knife, I would drive it into my heart—or into his!'

Her father made haste with trembling knees to return to his writing.

That there are times when the Evil One is permitted to have power over us we are well assured, not only from Holy Writ but from the teaching of learned doctors. I say not that we are to be excused from the consequence of sins committed during such times, because it is on account of our sins that they are permitted. This poor girl, I am very certain, was possessed by the demons of jealousy, rage, and despair. Else the great wickedness into which she now fell would never have been possible to her.

Heaven forbid that I should attempt to excuse her! But this day she was mad. On this day, as you will presently confess, she must have been mad.

She continued to sit in the same place, hands clenched, with set eyes gazing straight before her, and cheeks white. From time to time her father looked furtively round. But seeing no change, he went on with his work. Presently he became afraid to sit alone with her. He thought she was mad; he feared that she might get up suddenly and stab herself to death, or, perhaps, stab him in the back. He was never a brave or a strong man, and besides, he had already suffered so much from feminine wrath that he considered a raging woman worse than a tigress, and would cheerfully have fought a lion in the arena rather than face his own wife in one of her angry moods. But he had never before seen Bess so bad as this. It wanted a good hour of his usual time of leaving off work, but he got down from his stool, changed his coat hurriedly, and went out to his tavern.

If he went there an hour before his usual time, it was fully an hour after his usual time that he returned. Bess was still in her chair, but she no longer sat upright, scowling and fierce. Her head was buried in her hands, and she was weeping.

Mr. Westmoreland was afraid to speak to her. He crept silently upstairs, and went to bed supperless.

For in truth, something very strange had happened between the time when the Penman laid down his work and the time when he came home. The jaws of Death and the gates of Hell had been opened.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW BESS WENT OUT OF HER WITS.

IMMEDIATELY after her father had left the house—perhaps he waited until the Penman's departure—a man came to the door and stood without. For a few moments he watched and listened. Then he pushed the door open and looked in. The room was dark, and he could see nothing.

'Bess,' he cried—it was Aaron Fletcher—'Bess, I know you are here, and it is no use hiding. Come out this instant and talk with me, or I will come in.'

There was no answer, and he stepped into the room.

'You can go out again, Aaron,' said Bess. 'I have nothing to say to you.'

'I will go out when I have said what I came to say, and not before,' he replied. 'If you will listen, Bess, I have a good deal to say.'

'Say, then, what you have to say, and begone.' He hardly knew her voice, which was hard. 'Of course, I know very well what you have come to say. When you have said it once, you can go. If you dare to say it twice, I think I shall have to kill you. But, before you take the trouble to say it, or anything else, I tell you that it is no use. There is no man in the world for me now. Don't think of trying.'

'Bess'—the man understood what she meant—'d'ye think that I would come to crow over your trouble? Why—but you don't understand: you never did understand. A man as loves you true can't choose but be sorry for your trouble. I love you that true that I should even like to see you married to him, if he would have you. But he won't; he won't. Don't go to think now, Bess, that I'm glad; though I always knew what would

happen, and I hoped that you would perhaps throw him over and take a better man, and then we might have seen him crying and lamenting, instead of you. Pluck up spirit, Bess. Curse him. . . . With his head in the air and his step as if he was on his quarter-deck, and us men were all his crew, and you women were all for his own pleasure! Curse him, I say, for a villain! He went through the town just now dressed as if he was a nobleman, at least, with the people crying after him for luck, and the fools of women calling blessings on his head for a handsome man, if ever there was one. Curse him! Bess, why don't you curse the man who has played you false? Hast never a tongue in thy head?'

It was too dark to discern her face, otherwise Aaron might have been well pleased with the jealous madness which filled her eyes.

Then he cursed the Captain again, and with stronger words; but she answered nothing.

'I knew what he would do. I always knew it. I hate him, Bess! I have always hated

him as much as you hate him now ; or almost as much, because you must hate him after all he has done so that there is no evil you would not rejoice to see falling upon him.'

He paused for some effect to be produced by his words, just as an angler throws his line and stops to watch his float. But Bess made no sign.

'Who is he?' Aaron went on. 'Who is he that he should have all the good luck and I should have the bad? Why, when he came to the town he was in rags. I saw him come. He was a boy in rags. And now he is a Captain, with a gold-laced hat, and I—— Well, Bess, I am a bankrupt. That is what I have come to. And it is through him! Yes, through him and through that one-eyed Devil, who is Old Nick himself, or sold to him, I am a bankrupt—I am broke! First, through him, I lost my boat, the "Willing Mind," took by a privateer ; and then, through him, I lost the prize-money I looked to make ; and then, through him, my building-yard was burned. And now I have spent all my money, Bess,

and am broke. And all through him! I will be even with him, some day, if I swing for it.'

'Say what you have to say, Aaron, and go away:'

'I came to say, then, Bess'—he lowered his voice—' will you have revenge?'

'What revenge?'

'I tried to take it for myself three years ago. Did he never tell you who got him knocked o' the head and carried off to the crimp's? 'Twas the sweetest moment of my life, when he lay senseless at my feet. I done it, Bess. 'Twas none but me. He got off that time. He won't this.'

'Revenge? Do you think I will let you take revenge for me?'

'Bess—think! He hath deserted you, and broken his promise. And me he has brought to beggary, with the help of his friend the Devil with one eye.'

'I will have no revenge taken for me, I say. Go, Aaron. If that is all you have to say, go, and leave me alone. Revenge will not

bring back his heart to me. He loathes me now as much as once he loved me. I saw it in his eyes. Will revenge change his eyes? There is nothing for me but to bear it till I die.'

Aaron sat down on the table. The tempter to evil was not to be sent away by a single word.

'What!' he asked. 'A woman of spirit, and do nothing, though her sweetheart proves false to her, and mocks and laughs at her! Have they told you how he laughs everywhere about you?' (This was a lie: Jack never spoke about her among his friends.) 'Why, the gentlemen all do it; they make bets with each other about such girls as you; and then they go away and tell each other, and laugh about her. Oh! you forgive him. 'Tis sweet Christian conduct. I suppose I should forgive him as well for the loss of the "Willing Mind," and the burning of my boat-yard?' He stopped to see if his words had produced any effect upon her: but she gave no sign. 'You will dance at his wedding, I dare say. He is going to

marry the daughter of the Admiral—him with the wooden leg.'

'He is not married yet.'

'He is going to be married,' said Aaron—but this was also a lie—'by special license, and without banns, to-morrow; for his ship is under orders, and the Captain will set sail in a few days. He wants to be married before he goes. 'Tis a pretty little lady, and he will make her happy. They say he is head and ears in love with her, and nothing too good for her. I dare say he was always a fond lover. You found him a fond lover, didn't you, Bess, in the old days?'

'Are you sure?' she asked. 'Oh! the old woman did not tell me this. Are you quite sure? To-morrow? He will marry her to-morrow? So soon. Oh! is there no hope left at all?'

'The negro woman went about the town to-day telling everybody. You can ask her if it is true. What do I know? The Captain was not likely to tell me, was he? Well, Bess, it must be a pleasant thing for you to be think-

ing that his arms are now round her neck, which used to be round yours. He is kissing her red-and-white cheek now, just as he used to kiss yours, in the old days when he used to make a fool of you. And to-morrow, he will be happy with his bride. That is something to make you feel forgiving and well-wishing, isn't it?'

'Oh! I shall go mad!' she cried. 'I cannot bear it; I shall go mad!'

'To be sure, there are differences. She is a gentlewoman, and you are only a tradesman's daughter. She is soft, and has pretty manners, I dare say, though her father is an old salt. Whatever you are, Bess, no one ever called you soft. She is fair, and you are dark. She loves him, I dare say, better than you ever could. She can wear a hoop, and carry a fan, and paint her face, and, as for you, Bess——Why, what is the matter?'

'I will kill him first!' she cried, wildly. 'Aaron, I will kill him with my own hand!'

'Nay, Bess, why with your own hand, when there is mine ready for your service? And as

for that, you are in such a rage that you would surely bungle it ; ten chances to one you would botch and bungle it. Now, I am calm. If I take it in hand, I shall make as pretty a job of it as anyone can desire. Besides, Bess, if anyone is to swing for putting such a villain out of the way, it shall be me, not you, my girl. For love of you, and hate of him, I should be content to swing. But maybe. . . . Why, Bess——'

'Aaron'—she laid her hand upon his shoulder, catching her breath short—'oh! I would rather see him dead and in his grave than let him marry her.'

'He must be dead to-night then, or he will marry her to-morrow. Hark ye, Bess, the time has gone for crying. We must do it at once—this very night. To-morrow he will be married. The next day, or the day after, he takes the command of his ship. This very evening he hath gone to the Club with the Admiral. He will but drink a single glass of punch with the gentlemen, who will wish him joy, and will then return to his new mistress,

with whom he thinks to spend the evening kissing and making love. Do you mark my words?'

'Yes yes I am listening.'

'In half an hour or so he will be returning by this road. Suppose, Bess, he should meet us on the way—the woman he has deserted and the man he has ruined?'

'Let us go!' she cried. 'Let us go at once. He shall never marry her. Let us go! Why, Aaron, are you for hanging back?'

'There is time enough—no hurry. See, my girl, I have brought with me—'tis all I have left of my privateering—a pair of ship's pistols.' He lugged them out of his pockets and laid one on each leg, still sitting on the table. 'They are loaded; I loaded them half an hour ago, a brace of bullets in each, and the flints are new. No hurry, Bess. Let us consider.' She was already more than half-mad, but he thought to madden her still more. 'Let us consider. All the world knows thy history, Bess.' This, too, was a lie, because no one knew it. 'When you go forth again the

women will point and say after you, "There goes the girl who thought to marry the handsome Captain! There goes Bess, who thought to be the wife of Captain Easterbrook! Pride goes before a fall. Now she will have to marry some honest tarpaulin, like the rest, if any be found to have her." 'Tis a hard fate, Bess. Whereas——'

'Aaron, let us go. Quick! quick! Give me the pistols.'

'Nay—nay. You to have the pistols?' he replied, in no hurry, and still trying to madden her. 'Whereas, if we take care that he shall marry no one, they cannot cry out after you, and he shall not have another wife.'

'I would rather he were dead,' she said. 'Aaron, let me kill him with my own hand!'

'Will you come with me?'—he put up his pistols—'or will you stay with me? 'Tis but five minutes' walk to the dark place in the road where we stopped him once before. But come with me. If you stay here, you will know nothing till I come back, when the job is done. If you come with me, you shall see it done.

Why, your revenge will be doubled if you stand by and see it done. And when he falls, Bess, cry out quick that it was thy doing. So, in his last moments, he shall feel that thou hast revenged thyself.'

'Come—quick—before I repent! Let us kill him quickly! Oh! Aaron, I am all on fire! I burn. Come——'

Aaron nodded his head, and leisurely rose, satisfied at length with the spirit of murder which he had called up. It made her pant and gasp and tear at his arm to drag him along.

'One word, first,' he said. 'I am not going to do this all for nothing. When the job is done, Bess, you will marry me?'

'Yes. You may marry me, or you may murder me. I care nothing which. Oh! he shall never marry her—never! Come, Aaron, come! We shall be too late!'

I say that she was mad. It could not be in any other mood but madness that Bess would become a murderess. Truly, Aaron was a crafty and cunning man, thus to turn her

thoughts to revenge, and to make a murder done for private wrongs—but did Jack set fire to his boat-yard, or take the 'Willing Mind'?—seem as if it was a righteous act of retribution for her sake. Why could he not murder his enemy without dragging Bess into the crime with him? I know not: but I suppose that he thought to bind her to him by the guilty secret which the two would have between them; as if the knowledge would not keep them apart: for, with such a secret, the whole breadth of the world should not be wide enough to keep the two asunder. But it is impossible so much as to guess at the secrets of Aaron's mind at such a moment. One thing is certain, that, like Bess, he was driven well-nigh desperate by his misfortunes, which, however, he was not justified in laying on the Captain. Perhaps he had no thought at the time, except of revenge, and no other desire than to gratify Bess—whom still, I believe, he loved, after his manner—and himself in the same manner, and at a single blow.

'Come,' he said.

Then he directed her to go on in advance, so that if anyone should pass her on the road they might not connect him with her as a companion, and ordered her to wait for him in that place where the grass strip broadened into a little roadside green planted full of trees. Here she was to await him.

'Twas the same place where, three years before, Aaron had made his first attempt, the failure of which might have deterred him, one would think. But it did not. Here he presently joined the girl.

'No one is abroad,' he said. 'I have passed none upon the road. That is well. Heart up, Bess! In a few minutes thou shalt be happy, if revenge can make thee happy. He will kiss his fine mistress no more.'

'Happy! There is no more happiness for me. Oh! Aaron—quick—do what thou hast to do quick, lest I repent and stop thee. Oh! Jack—my Jack—must I murder thee?'

'Keep dark,' said Aaron. 'Why, you are losing heart already. I am sorry you came with me. Keep dark, I say, and look not forth

until the shot is fired. As for me, I scorn to hide. I am here to kill him if I can, or let him, if he can, kill me. He has a sword, and I have my pistols. Let him fight it out. It is a fair battle between us. But keep back, Bess, and keep dark. I think I can hear his foot-step.'

When, three years before, Jack Easterbrook had walked along the same road at the same time, his head was full of love for the very woman who now stood in the shade of the trees waiting to see him done to death. From the madness of jealous women, good Lord, deliver the men! And from the inconstancy of per-jured lovers, good Lord, deliver the women!

As she stood and listened, the sound of his footstep—she could not be mistaken in the step—fell upon Bess's ear, and immediately the Captain himself was to be plainly seen in the twilight, walking briskly along the road. As for Aaron, in spite of his brave words, he kept in the shade of the trees, feeling, doubt-less, as is the way with murderers, more con-fidence while in hiding than in the open.

Before she heard his footstep, the poor girl, the prey of all the evil passions, stood breathing quickly, her hands clenched, burning with rage, and mad for revenge. Yet, mark what happened. At the very first footfall, at the first sound of the step which still she loved, the whole of her madness fell from her as a woman's cloak may fall from her shoulders; her heart stood still, her knees trembled, and her love went out again to him. Also she saw —now, was not this a thought sent to her direct from Heaven's throne of mercy in order to save a poor sinner from a dreadful crime?— she saw, I say, in imagination, her lover lying dead upon the ground, his pale face turned up to the stars, never to come back to life again, and she herself standing over him—who had murdered him. Already she felt upon her forehead the seal of murder as it was placed upon the front of Cain. Already she felt the terrible remorse of murder. Near every crime can be atoned for, except murder. You may rob a man; you may slander him; things stolen may be replaced; things said may be with-

drawn: but his life you cannot restore to a man. Therefore there is no crime so dreadful as murder, and no remorse so fearful as that of a murderer, even when his conscience is as hardened as that of Aaron Fletcher himself. 'Oh!' Bess told me afterwards, though the poor girl knew not how to put all these her thoughts into words, but could only speak of them brokenly, 'I thought that if he were to die, I must die too, and that with no hope of forgiveness, so that I should never sit beside him in Heaven, and never ask his mercy. And I saw that if he would leave me, he must; and, oh! how could I be so wicked? How could I? No; it was not Aaron's fault; 'twas my own mad, jealous heart.'

There wanted but a moment when Aaron would have stepped out and discharged his pistols. There was no relenting in him; he had no qualms of conscience and no forebodings of remorse. He had lost everything —his sweetheart, his boat, his business, his fortune—by this man, he thought; 'twas little

revenge indeed, in return for so much injury, to kill him. Perhaps, afterwards, with the gibbet in sight and the irons on his legs, he might have felt remorse. But one doubts, seeing how hardened are most of the villains who go forth to Tyburn to the fatal tree, and how little true repentance the Ordinary doth witness.

He was waiting, then, the pistol cocked. His enemy was almost within his reach when Bess rushed out from her hiding-place, crying, 'Jack! Jack! Save yourself! Save yourself!'

He stopped, and drew his sword.

'Fly!' she cried; 'Aaron is among the trees with his pistols. We came to murder thee. Oh! fly for thy life. Let him kill me instead. He shall shoot at thee through my body!'

She stood before him, her arms out as if to stop the pistol-bullet.

'Stand aside, Bess,' said Jack. 'Now, Aaron, ye cowardly, skulking dog, come out! Show yourself, man! Bring out your pistols,

I say! Come, ye sneaking, murdering villain!'

Aaron might have shot him on the spot where he stood, breast bared, so to speak, for the pistol. But he did not, because so great is the power of authority over such men as Aaron, when one speaks who is in the habit of command, that he obeyed and came forth meekly, his pistols in his hand, like a dog who comes at call to be whipped.

'Lay down your weapons,' said Jack, sword in hand.

Aaron obeyed, saying nothing

'So,' said the Captain, 'this is now the second time that thou hast attempted my life. Man, if I had thee on board my ship I would keel-haul thee, or maybe hang thee for mutiny. Know, sirrah, that the mere conspiring to murder hath brought many a poor rogue to the gallows. Now, I know not wherefore thou didst resolve to make this second attempt. Remember, however, that the first score is not yet paid off. Yet I heard some talk of losses and the burning of boat-yards, whereby it

seems as if some greater Power had interfered to punish thee. Go, now. Perhaps to-morrow I shall determine what further may be done.'

Aaron obeyed, walking away slowly and sullenly, the pistols lying on the ground.

Then Jack turned to the girl who had saved his life. 'So, Bess,' he said, 'you came out to murder me, did you?'

'Yes,' she confessed.

'I was in hopes that you had laid my words to heart, and had forgotten the past.'

'I can never forget the past. Oh, Jack! 'tis too much to ask of any poor woman. 'Tis too much!' She burst into crying and weeping. 'Oh! I am an unhappy wretch, who would even murder the man I love better than all the world.'

'Nay,' said Jack, 'there is no harm done, because — d'ye see—I am unhurt, and you changed your intention in time. If I did not know thee better, Bess, I might think that this was a trick of thine. But Aaron hates me of old; and you—since I came home.'

'I have never hated you, Jack. God knows I wish I was dead, and out of your why.'

'My poor girl, you are already out of my way, if you would only think so. For the sake of a few love-passages three years ago, way waste and spoil your life?'

'I cannot take back what I have given. To-night they told me that you are to marry Miss Castilla. That made me mad. But I am not mad any longer. Go to your new mistress, Jack. I will give you no more trouble—no more trouble. Make love to her as you did to me. Tear her heart out of her as you tore mine. I will give you no trouble—no trouble at all. I will not try to stand between her and you.'

'Foolish girl! Forget me, Bess, and find another lover.'

'I have tried to curse thee, Jack, but I cannot. Oh! I cannot. I have tried a dozen times. My lips will not form the words, nor would my heart mean them if I could say those words. I have tried this night to

kill thee. But I could not. Therefore it is certain that I am not to do thee any harm. This is better, because, whatever happens, thy heart will not be thereby the more hardened against me.'

Jack made no reply. Perhaps he was touched by what she said.

'Go, Jack. Go to thy mistress.' This she said, not rudely or scornfully, but quietly. 'Jack, I know now what has been lying in my mind. It is that I have a message for thee. It is that GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, and *that in the way that will touch thee the deepest.* I know not how that will be, and, for myself, I desire no harm for thee. I will henceforth neither speak nor think hard things of thee. But remember: no other man shall ever kiss me, because I am thine, Jack—I belong to thee. Oh! Jack, my sweetheart, my love, GOD HIMSELF will punish thee, unhappy boy! *and that in the way that most will touch thee!*'

Jack laughed lightly—yes, he laughed—and went his way.

This is what happened between the time when the Penman left his daughter and the time when he returned. Said I not that the jaws of Death and the gates of Hell were opened on this night?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW BESS RECOVERED HER SENSES.

WOMAN is a variable and a changeable creature. Many poets and philosophers have insisted upon this maxim. Mr. Westmoreland, as well as Socrates, had good reason to feel the truth of it, and could testify to it from his own experience, under the rule of wife first, and of daughter afterwards; though the capricious nature of the latter empress was a kind of heaven compared with the clapper-clawings, rubs, and buffets which marked the reign of the former. The next morning the Penman came downstairs meekly resigned to do the daily necessary house-work, which his daughter should have done—namely, to lay his desk in order for the day's work, find something for

breakfast, and, towards the hour of noon, interrupt his calculations in order to prepare dinner of some kind—which had been his lot for the last two months: in fact, though he had not the wit to connect the two events, ever since the return of the Lieutenant on board the French prize. He was, therefore, truly astonished when he saw that the room was already swept clean and tidy, a coal fire lit, for the autumn morning was cold, and his breakfast set out upon the table, just as he loved to have his food, ready to his hand, without any thought or trouble about it; both plenty as regards quantity, and pleasing as regards quality. More than this, his daughter Bess was busy with a duster among his papers—no one but Bess knew how to take up a sheet of paper, dust the desk about and under it, and lay it down again in its place. She wore a white apron, her sleeves were turned up above her elbows, and she was going about her work steadily and quietly, as if nothing at all had happened. More again, when she saw her father, she smiled, and saluted him. Now, she

had not smiled, or said a single gracious thing to him for two months and more.

'Come, father,' she said, 'take your breakfast while the beer is fresh and hath still a head. The cask is well-nigh out, and I must have another brew. The knuckle of pork has got some good cuts left yet; as for the bread, it is dry, because it is baker's bread, and last week's baking. But to-morrow you shall have some new home-made.'

This was a very strange and remarkable change. Nothing at all had happened to make her happier. On the contrary, her lover was certainly going to marry Castilla, and he was going away: her affairs were as hopeless as they could well be. Yet now her soul was calm. It may be that one cannot go on for ever at a white heat of wrath; but some have been known to brood over their wrongs all the days of their lives. Her soul was calm. That was the change which had fallen upon her; her eyes were no longer fierce, and her cheek was no more alternately flaming red and deathly white. Nor did her lips move continually as if

she were vehemently reproaching someone. Her face was soft again. She told me afterwards, speaking humbly and meekly, that when she had tried to curse her unfaithful lover, her lips refused; and when she had tried to murder him—her heart failing her at the last—the words that she said to him—namely, that she would seek no more to harm him, and would think no more of him with bitterness, feeling assured that God would bring the thing home to him in such a way as would touch him most surely—these words seemed as if they were whispered in her ears or put into her mouth; and then suddenly, as she uttered them, all the rage and madness which had torn her for two months left her, and peace fell upon her heart. Those who please may put upon this confession any other meaning; for my own part, I can see but one. What that interpretation is, I leave to the reader.

Mr. Westmoreland, however, when he observed this change, fell to shaking and shivering, betraying in his looks the most vivid apprehensions. The reason of this phenomenon

was that in the old days before his wife ran away from him—Bess during the last two months had in other respects greatly resembled her mother as to temper—whenever a domestic storm of greater fury than usual was brewing, it was always preceded by a period of unusual activity in the house, with a strange and unnatural zeal for cleanliness and tidiness. The memory of this fact, and of the terrible storms which afterwards used to break over the poor Penman's head, caused this awakening of terror. Was Bess in this respect also going to take after her mother?

'Child,' he stammered, 'what—what—what in Heaven's name hath happened to thee? Have I wronged thee in any way? Tell me, Bess, only tell me, what have I done to thee?'

'Why, father, nothing. I have been ill lately. Now I am better. Sit down and take your breakfast. For dinner you shall have something better than cold knuckle of pork.'

He obeyed, wondering and distrustful.

'I've been ill of late, father,' she repeated;

'and you've been neglected and uncomfortable. It's my fault that the room was this morning up to my ankles in dust and dirt. But I've been very ill, and couldn't do anything but think of the pains in my head.'

'Well, Bess,' he replied, rallying a little, 'to be sure you've been a bit—so to speak—haughty, for the last two months. It came on, I remember, about the time when the Lieutenant came home.'

'It was about that time, father. Two months ago I first began to have these dreadful pains in the head.'

'If it was toothache you should have gone to Mr. Brinjes, and had it out. If it was tic, there's nothing to help it but a charm. But why not ask Mr. Brinjes to charm it away?'

'It was not toothache. I dare say it was tic. But now it has almost gone.'

'Was it, Bess—was it'—he dropped his voice—'was it anything to do with Aaron Fletcher? Sometimes I've thought there might have been a love disappointment. Was it Aaron Fletcher?'

'Aaron Fletcher is nothing to me, and never will be.'

'Well, I'm glad to hear that, Bess, because Aaron is a bad man—a man of violence; a crafty man, my dear—a headstrong man—a man without virtue or religion—and an unforgiving man as well. I've watched Aaron, man and boy, since he was born. Aaron will end badly. Of late he has been drinking, and his business is broken up. Aaron will come to a bad end.'

'Well—that's enough said about me, father. Go on with the cold knuckle.'

'And now shall I hear thee singing about thy work again, Bess? and laughing again just as before? It does my old heart good to hear thee sing and laugh. Nay, that doth never put me out, though I be struggling with the sine and tangent and even with the versed sine. 'Tis when I hear thee weep and groan, and when to all my questions I get no answer, and when thine eyes are red and thy cheek pale, and when all day long I see thee sitting neglectful and careless—'tis then, my dear, that the

figures swim before my eyes and the result comes all wrong. 'Tis then that if I try to write, my flourishes are shaky, and the finials lack firmness.'

'Nay, father,' she replied, 'I fear I shall not laugh and sing again all my life. The kind of tic which I have had takes away the power of laughing and the desire for singing. But I hope never again to be so troubled.'

'Alas!' said her father, 'I would I were a preacher, so that I could exhort women to good temper. Sometimes when the learned and pious Vicar is expounding the wisdom of the Chaldees—which is, no doubt, a most useful subject for the Church to consider—I venture to think that a word might be spared on the sins of temper and on the hasty tongue and the striking hand. Truly, for my own part, in all things but one have I been singularly blessed, yea, above my fellow-creatures. For I have a house convenient and weather-tight; I belong to the one true Church, being neither a Papist nor a Schismatic; I am assured of my salvation, through no merits of mine own; I am not of

lofty station but obscure, yet not of the vilest herd; I live sufficiently, and, when my daughter pleases to exercise her skill of housewifery, with toothsomeness; no man envies me, and I have no enemies; 'tis true my shoulders are round and I am weak of arm, but what of that? To crown all, I have been endowed by beneficent Providence with the love of divine mathematics and the gift of fine penmanship, so that my work, whether I copy, or engross, or write letters, or work out logarithms, or consider the theses, lemmas, corollaries, problems, and curious questions advanced by ingenious professors of the exact sciences, I live all day long in continual happiness. I would not change my lot for any other, save and except for one thing. I am filled with pride, which I hope is not sinful, because it is in gratitude for the gifts of Heaven. But there is one thing, my child. I have wanted no blessing in this life, which to many of my fellow-creatures is, for no seeming fault of theirs, a vale of misery and of tears. But, alas! I still found my comfort spoiled by the temper of thy mother while she remained

with me. And I feared, Bess—I say that I feared—lest thou might also take after her, and so the scoldings, the peevishness, the discontent, and the violence might begin again. I am not so young as I was then, and I doubt whether I could endure that misery again.'

'Fear nothing, father. Why, whenever did I ask or do aught to make you think that I should upbraid you? As for my temper, I will try to govern myself. Fear nothing, father. To-day you shall have as good a dinner as you can desire, to make up for the past shortcomings. What will you have?' She spoke so gently and softly that her father was quite reassured, and plucked up his courage.

'Well, child, since thou art in so happy a disposition—Lord, grant that it continue!—I would choose, if I may, a hodge-podge, with an onion pie. They are the two things, as thou knowest well, which most I love. With hodge-podge, onion pie, and a merry heart, a man may make continual feast.'

It was not a merry heart that returned to

poor Bess, but it was the outward seeming or show of cheerfulness which not only returned but remained with her, so that she now listened to her father's garrulous prattle with apparent interest, and gratified his love of good feeding by toothsome dishes, of which there was no more notable compounder than herself. This day especially she regaled him with a most excellent hodge-podge, in itself a dish fit for a king, and also with an onion pie, a thing counted dainty by those of a strong digestion, though to some who have a delicate stomach it may be thought of too coarse a flavour, being composed of potatoes, onions, apples, and eggs, disposed in layers in a deep pie-dish, and covered over with a light crust of flour and suet.

While Bess was engaged in the preparation of this banquet, the Barber came running across the road, as was his wont when the morning business was completed, and he had any news of importance to communicate—for the spread of news at Deptford is in this way. First it is whispered at the Barber's shop, then it is

whispered by the Barber to his customers and his cronies, and next it is carried by them in all directions around the town.

'Have you heard the news, friend Westmoreland?' he asked, with the air of one who is the possessor of an important secret.

'Why,' Mr. Westmoreland replied, 'since I have not seen you before this morning, gossip, how should I hear any news?'

'You will be astonished,' said the Barber. 'Those who hold their heads the highest fall the soonest. One whom you know well, friend, and have known long, is broke. Ay, you may well look surprised and ask who it is. He is broke, who, but a short time ago, was master of a thriving business, and seemed as if he would save money.'

'Who is it, then?'

'I have myself suspected a great while what would happen. For, thank Heaven, I can see as far as most men, and can put two and two together, and am no babbler of secrets, but keep them to myself, or talk of them with my friends over a pipe of tobacco and a glass,

being a discreet person. Wherefore, when I heard of certain accidents, and saw in what a spirit they were received, I made up my mind what would happen.'

'Who is it?' asked Mr. Westmoreland, when this garrulous person had partly talked himself out of breath.

'It is a man whom you know well; and Bess, here, knows him very well, too.'

'If, Mr. Skipworth,' said Bess, 'you would tell my father your news, we could then talk about it afterwards.'

'Why, then, Aaron Fletcher is broke. That is the first news. Since the burning of his yard, he hath done no work, not even to putting up some shed and carrying on the business. What were we to think of that? When he went privateering he made but little prize-money, but had quickly to come home again. Thenceforth he hath been living on his stock, and hath now come to an end, and is broke. This morning he was to have been arrested. The writs are out for him, and the officers came to seek him with intent to take him to the

Marshalsea, where his case would have been tried at the Palace Court.'

'Would have been tried?' asked the Penman. 'Is it not to be tried, then?'

'I said *would*, because for one thing which his creditors thought not of—he hath escaped them. Otherwise he would have languished in jail until his death.'

Here the Barber wanted to be asked further what was that happy incident which had enabled Aaron to 'scape prison; for one who is a retailer of news loves not to expend it all at a breath, but must still keep some back.

'His father,' he continued, 'was a substantial man, and saved money, which the son has spent. He inherited, besides the building-yard, a good business, and a fast smack, the "Willing Mind," for his trade across the Channel. Now the smack is lost, the yard is burned, the business is ruined, and the money is spent.'

'An idle fellow,' said Mr. Westmoreland; 'a fellow who loved not work. But how hath he escaped his creditors?'

'He will not go to prison; for in the night,

we now learn from certain authority, he walked over to Woolwich, where he hath enlisted in the Marines, and so is beyond the reach of his creditors, who cannot now arrest him. So he escapes the prison, and exchanges the Marshalsea for a man-o'-war. Maybe 'tis better to be killed by a cannon-shot than to be starved in a debtors' gaol.'

So, after more reflections on the folly of young men and the certain end of laziness and extravagance—which have been put more concisely by King Solomon the Wise—the Barber returned to his shop; and before noon everyone in Deptford had heard the surprising news of Aaron's fall.

This intelligence made Bess tremble, thinking on the madness of the last night, when this young man was so desperate, being now assured that he was bankrupt, that he was ready to commit a murder, caring little whether he was found out and hanged, or no; and she herself was so desperate in her wrath and jealousy, that she was ready to commit murder in order to prevent another woman's happiness. Why,

what would be the condition of that guilty pair now, were Jack lying dead? Since, however, Aaron was bankrupt it was now certain that he had already resolved to go away and enlist in the Marines, when he came to her and proposed the crime; and that he intended to leave the dreadful secret of the murder, had it been committed, to herself alone—a burden greater than she could bear.

For Aaron, 'twas the only way of escape, to 'list in one of His Majesty's regiments. Naturally, he chose the Marines as the branch belonging to the sea. To carry a musket on board a King's ship, after being a Lieutenant in a privateer, not to speak of commanding the 'Willing Mind,' is to come down in the world, indeed. Yet that he cared for little, considering the alternative of a debtors' prison, terrible to all, but most terrible to a man who, like Aaron, had spent all his life in the open air; and most certainly it is better for the country that a stout and active fellow should be fighting her battles than that he should be laid by the heels in a prison doing nothing. Mark,

however, what followed. Aaron walked to Woolwich that night, where there is a depôt for Marines, which in that war represented twenty-five companies. He enlisted in the morning. When they began to teach him his drill it was found that he already knew as much as is expected of any recruit when he is passed for service. Therefore he was, with others, marched to Chatham ready for embarkation. There are many remarkable coincidences in this history, but there is none more remarkable than the fact that Aaron should have been shipped as a Marine on board the very ship, the 'Calypso,' of which the man he had tried to murder was Commander. This circumstance, with the consequences which followed, I can regard as nothing but providentially ordered.

When Aaron discovered who was the Captain of the ship, he fell at first into despair, and was ready to throw himself overboard, looking for floggings continually and on the merest pretext, with keel-haulings and every kind of tyranny, oppression, and punish-

ment. But he presently found that the Captain took no kind of notice of him, even when he was on sentry duty on the quarter-deck, and seemed not even to know that he was on board.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HOW PHILADELPHY REFUSED A BRIBE.

WHEN Bess had given her father his hodge-podge and onion pie, which he received as some compensation due to him for all past privations and recent neglect, she left him, and repaired to the Apothecary's.

Mr. Brinjes was already wide-awake, and in earnest conversation with Philadelphy. On the table between them lay the famous skull-stick, object of the deepest veneration and awe to the negro woman.

'What will you do for me,' he was saying, 'if I give you this stick? I am old now, and I have no enemies to punish, nor many friends to protect, and I want nothing for myself except that which not even an Obeah man can

procure for himself—his lost youth. . . . What will you do for me, Philadelphy, if I give it to you?'

'Massa Brinjes'—she clutched at the stick, and held it in her arms, kissing the skull—horrid thing!—which grinned at Bess as if it were alive, 'I will do everything. Ask me—tell me—I will do everything.'

'We shall see. Those who possess this stick—it must be given, not stolen, or the virtue vanishes—can do whatever they please. Why, if it were your own, there would be no woman in the country so powerful as you. If you have enemies, you could put Obi on them, and go sit in the sun and watch them slowly dying—Ha? I have seen the wise women on the West Coast sitting thus, and watching outside the hut wherein their enemy lay wasting away. And if you have friends, think of the good fortune you could bring them. Why, Miss Castilla you could marry to a Lord; not a beggarly ship Captain, but a rich Lord.'

'No—no,' said Philadelphy. 'She shall marry Mas' Jack. No one like him.'

. 'You could make her as rich as you could desire. If she wants children, you could send them to her. No need, then, to consult the cards, or to watch the birds, because you could have everything your own way to command, once you get the skull-stick. As for wind and rain, you could call for them when you pleased. See'—he rose and looked up at the sky, which was covered with driving clouds, the wind being fresh. 'See—you would like rain! 'Twould be good for Madam's garden, would it not? I call for rain.'

Strange! As he spoke, the drops pattered against the windows. Though 'twas a light and passing shower, yet it seemed to fall in reply to his call. He might have seen it on the point of falling, and prophesied after the event was decided: truly, Mr. Brinjes was crafty and subtle above all other men. But Philadelphy jumped, and kissed the stick again. 'You see, Philadelphy,' he went on, 'what you could do with this stick. It is wasted on me, because I am too old to want anything. I am past ninety, and you, I should think, are not

much over seventy. If I die before I give the stick away, it is lost: its virtue is gone. But there is still time. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?' He paused and considered a little before he went on again. 'Perhaps you think it will only compel rain, and is of no use as regards persons. Well, here is Bess to testify that I put Obi on Aaron Fletcher. He was formerly a thriving man, until he offended me. What hath happened to him since? First, he was tortured with toothache; next, his smack was taken by French privateers; then he went privateering himself, and did no good; then his boat-building sheds were burned, with all his tools and timber; lastly, he went bankrupt, and hath now, I fear, enlisted in the Marines to escape a prison. I have removed the Obi, and now leave him to his fate. What will you do for me if I give you the stick?'

Again the old woman clutched it and kissed it, with the unholy light of witchcraft in her eyes. I wonder if the Sorceress of Endor had a skull-stick.

'Stop a moment, Philadelphy. What will you do for me?'

'Everything, Massa Brinjes. Nothing in the world that I will not do for you.'

'There is only one thing that I cannot make my stick do for me. Everything else in the world I can do. But this thing I cannot do, and you can.'

Still clinging to the stick, the old woman implored him only to let her know what that was, in order that she might instantly go away and do it.

'Bess hath a sweetheart, and he hath proved a rover, as many sailors do. Bring him back to her arms and keep him constant, and I will bestow the stick upon thee.'

'Nay,' Bess cried quickly, 'since my sweetheart loves me no longer, I will have no charms to make him. I have promised besides, that I will trouble him no more.'

'Tell me his name,' cried the old woman, regardless of Bess. 'Only tell me his name, and I will do it for her.'

'Can you bewitch a man at sea?'.

'I can, I can,' she cried. 'I will make his heart soft for her, so that he will forget every other woman, and want none but Bess. Why,' she said, 'every negro woman knows a love charm.' This with some wonder that a wizard of Mr. Brinjes' power, and possessed of an Obeah stick, should not be able to do so simple a thing. 'I can make him love her all the same as he loved her at first. I can make him love her so as he shall never love another woman. If that is all, Massa Brinjes, let me carry away the stick.'

'Softly, softly. The thing is not done yet. If I give thee this stick I shall never get it back again. Wherefore, let us have it paid for first.'

'Tell me his name, then.' Philadelphy turned eagerly to Bess, 'Only tell me his name, girl, and I will make the charm to-day.'

'Nay,' Bess repeated, 'I want no charm to bring him back.'

'Be not so proud, Bess,' said Mr. Brinjes; 'you shall have what your friends can get you. As for you, Philadelphy, be not too ready.

What? You think I would give such a stick for a trifle? You think Bess's lover is some common sea-swab, I dare say—a master's mate, at best, or a gunner, or perhaps a shipwright. No, no; her lover is another guess kind, I promise you.'

'If he was an Admiral, he should come back to her. Tell me his name.'

'Even if he were promised to marry your young mistress, Miss Castilla?'

A negro woman cannot turn pale, particularly one so black as Philadelphy, nor can her colour come and go like that of a white woman: yet she changes colour when she is moved. Philadelphy not only changed colour, but she gasped and looked upon Mr. Brinjes as one astonished and dismayed.

'To marry Miss Castilla?' she repeated.

'What if Bess's lover had deserted her for your young mistress?'

'Don' say that—oh! Massa Brinjes, I cooden do it—no—no—I could do anything else, but I cooden do it even for the stick.'

'I say, Philadelphy, what if his name was

Jack Easterbrook? Why, it is Jack. It is the Captain who was Bess's lover. Where were your eyes not to discover that? You, a witch! Where were your eyes, I say?'

'I cooden do it—no—I cooden do it.'

'Look at the stick again, old woman. Think of the joy of having the stick your own. Think of what you could do with the stick to help you. What is the Captain to you, compared with the possession of the stick?'

She looked at it with yearning eyes. 'Suppose that the thing which all your life you have been taught to regard as the symbol and proof of power was to be offered you at a price. This was the old negro woman's case—she could have the Obeah stick in return for—what?

'At the worst,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'it would make her unhappy for a week.'

'No—no—Miss Castilla, she dun set her heart upon the Captain.'

'Well,' the tempter continued, 'with the help of the stick you can not only find a rich and noble lover for her, one who will make her

happy, but you can also give her a charm and make her forget the Captain.'

'No—no,' said the old woman, 'Miss Castilla will never forget the Captain.'

'Then, when his fancy returns to his old love, which it will do before long, your young mistress will be made unhappy. Come, Philadelphy, think of this stick; think of having it your own—the great Obeah stick.'

'Who are you'—she turned fiercely upon Bess—'to take away a young gentleman officer? Stay with your own people, and let the Captain stay with his. Massa Brinjes, if I give you the secret to keep alive—ten—fifty—a hundred years if you like—will you give me the stick?'

'If you have that secret, old woman,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I will tear it out of you, if I have to rack every joint in your body with rheumatism. If you know that secret, it is as good as mine already. No, Philadelphy, it is the Captain or nothing. Look at the stick again, Philadelphy. Take it in your hands.'

'Oh! I will get the girl—what a fuss about

a girl! As if she was a lady!—I will get her any other man in Deptford. Plenty handsome men in Deptford.'

'I want none of her charms, Mr. Brinjes, for Jack or anyone else,' Bess said again. 'Let her have the stick, if you like, and let her go.'

'There!' Philadelphy cried, triumphantly. 'You see? She wants none of my charms. Why, there, take the secret instead, and let me have the stick, and you shall live for a hundred years more.'

Here one cannot but admire the way in which these two magicians believed each in the other's powers, but were uncertain about their own. For—first—if Mr. Brinjes, by means of his skull-stick, could draw down rain from the sky, why could he not move the Captain's heart? And, next, if Philadelphy could turn a faithless lover back to his fidelity, why could she not so order Castilla's heart that she should resign the Captain without a pang? But this she could not do. Yet the wizard believed in the witch, and the witch in the wizard.

'It must be Jack,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'or nothing.'

'Then,' she replied, sorrowfully, 'it is nothing. Put away the stick, Mr. Brinjes, lest I die of longin', and let me go.'

He replaced the stick in the corner. The skull grinned at the old woman as if in contempt because she had missed so magnificent an opportunity.

'Very well, Philadelphy,' said Mr. Brinjes, returning to his pillows. 'I do not believe you know any charm at all. You know nothing. You are only an ignorant old negro woman. In Jamaica they would laugh at you. You are not a wise woman. You only pretend to make charms. Why, anybody could make as good a charm as you.'

She shook her head, but made no reply, still gazing at the stick.

'All your tricks are only pretence. You cannot, in reality, do anything. As for your cards, you cannot even tell a fortune properly. If you can, tell Bess hers.'

Philadelphy drew from her pocket a pack

of cards, greasy and well worn, and began to shuffle them and to lay them out according to her so-called science. Bess, who would have no charms, could not resist the sight of the cards, and looked on anxiously while the old woman laid out her cards and muttered her conclusions.

'The dark woman is Bess,' she said—'the fair woman is Miss Castilla—the King of Hearts is the Captain. Oh! the dark woman wins!' She dashed the cards aside, and would go on no further, but, with every sign of alarm and anxiety, rose up, and, tightening her red turban, she hurried away.

'Always,' said Bess, 'she has told me the same fortune. Always the same. Yet I know not.'

'These divinations by cards,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'are known by many women even in this country, where there is so little wisdom. I wonder if Philadelphy lied when she offered to sell me that secret. If I thought she had such a secret—but I doubt, else why doth she continue so old and grow so infirm? No; she

hath not that knowledge, which I must seek on the African coast. Bess, take courage. We will sail to that coast—you, Jack, and I; we will be all carried away together; and, first, I will find that secret, and, next, we will go forth to the Southern Seas, and there dig up the treasure of the great galleon.'

She shook her head.

'As for me,' she said, 'there will be no sailing away, with you or with Jack, nor any happiness at all; and as for you, Daddy, when you are carried away it will be with feet first.'

'Perhaps! Yet I doubt! For I do continually dream of those seas, and clearly discern the ship, with myself upon the poop, and the island not far off, where at the foot of the palm-tree there lie the boxes. All shall be thine, Bess—to dispose of as thou wilt.'

'Why,' said Bess, simply, 'what should I do with it but give it all to Jack?'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOW BAD NEWS CAME HOME.

NOTHING at all was heard of the 'Calypso' for three or four months. It was not even certain whither she had sailed, except that she was with Sir Edward Hawke's fleet. But it was known that M. Thurot had got out of Dunquerque with five frigates, on board of which were a large number of troops, with intent to make a descent upon Ireland, and we conjectured that perhaps the 'Calypso' might have been ordered to join the squadron in chase of that gallant Frenchman. But that proved not to be the case.

It was in January—namely, on the evening of the 15th of January in the year 1760—that the news arrived which filled the hearts of all with shame and confusion. 'Twas a wild and

tempestuous night, fitting the nature of the intelligence which then arrived. The wind blew up the river in great gusts, and the rain drove slanting into the faces of those who were out. I remembered, afterwards, that I had met Philadelphy in the morning. The old woman was always full of omens and prognostications. Sometimes she had seen a ghost in the night—surely there was never a greater ghost-seer than this old negress—and sometimes she had been warned by one of the many signs which terrify the superstitious. 'Hi! Massa Luke,' she said, in her negro way, which it is unnecessary to imitate, 'there's bad news coming, for sure. Last night the cock crowed twice at midnight, and an owl screeched round the chimney; there was a dog barking all night long, and I saw a ghost. There's bad news coming!' I asked her what the ghost was like, but she refused to tell me. Well, it is true that on many other occasions she foretold disaster (because to this kind of witch there are never any signs of good luck), and her prophecies proved naught. But on this

day, alas! she proved a true prophetess of evil.

At the Sir John Falstaff some of the company, including Mr. Brinjes, who was never late, had already arrived, and were hanging up their hats, the candles being lit, a great coal fire burning, pipes laid on the table, and the chairs set.

'There hath arrived bad news,' said Captain Petherick, the Commissioner of the Yard. 'I heard talk of it at the Navy House this morning. It is said that we have lost a frigate. They say also that we have lost her cowardly—a thing which one is not ready to believe. But I have not heard the particulars, and I know not the name of the craft. 'Tis pity, but 'tis true, that there should be found in every war cowardly commanders, in British as well as in French bottoms. Those of us who have memories can remember the last war, gentlemen. Well, we must quickly build or capture another ship, and find a better Captain. We will give the command to Jack Easterbrook.'

So saying, he sat down and began to fill his pipe leisurely. Just as he had finished these words, and before Mr. Brinjes had time to do more than to open his mouth, there came running into the room the landlord, having in his hand the 'London Post' of the evening, brought down the river from town by some boatman. His face was pale, and his eyes full of terror.

'Oh! gentlemen,' he cried, 'gentlemen! Here is such news! I cannot trust my eyes. For God's sake read the newspaper! But who shall tell the Admiral?'

'Is it news from the Fleet?' asked Captain Petherick.

'It is, your Honour.' The man looked as if he was afraid to tell his news. 'Oh! gentlemen,' he repeated, 'who shall tell the Admiral?'

'Is it bad news?' asked Mr. Brinjes.

'It is the worst news possible. Gentlemen —it is—it is. . . .' he looked about him to see if the Admiral was, perhaps, present, hitherto unseen. 'It is news of—of—of

Captain Easterbrook, gentlemen. Of no other, indeed.'

'What!' cried the Apothecary; 'bad news? The worst news? Then is our boy dead.' He sat down in a chair, and looked from face to face. 'Jack is dead.'

'It is the worst news possible,' repeated the landlord.

'Jack is dead,' said all together, looking at one another in dismay.

'Jack is dead,' repeated Mr. Brinjes. 'There hath been an action, and Jack hath fallen. Poor Bess! Yet, now he will never marry the other.' The company knew not what he meant. 'Well, every man must take his chance—I looked for other things—but.... Jack is dead! Some die young, and some die old. To those who die old it seems as if their years have been but a dream. What matters, therefore, when a man dies? Wherefore, devil take all black negro witches with their lying prophecies!' Again the company asked themselves what Mr. Brinjes might mean.

The landlord shook his head.

'No, sir. No, gentlemen. Oh! you will not understand. Read the 'Post.' Captain Easterbrook hath lost his ship.'

'If,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'he lost his ship, of course he first lost his life or else his limbs. He would not be taken below while there was yet life enough left to fight his ship.'

'Gentlemen,' cried the landlord again, 'your Honours will not listen. It is in the 'London Post.'

He held out his newspaper, but no one offered to take it. Everyone knew now that something had happened worse than death. Then they heard the Admiral's step as he entered the house and stumped along the passage with his escort of negroes.

'Gentlemen,' said the landlord again, 'who shall tell him? Again he held out the paper. They looked at each other and held back. No one offered to take the paper; they were afraid. It is one kind of courage to walk up to a cannon's mouth, and another to become a messenger of bad tidings.

Then the Admiral came in, followed by his

two negroes. He saluted the company cheerfully, and gave his hat and cloak to his servants. This done he took his seat in his usual place. But the other gentlemen standing about the fire did not, as was customary, follow his example. They hesitated, looked first at the Admiral and then at the landlord.

'Gentlemen, be seated,' said the Admiral.

'Sir'—it was Mr. Brinjes who spoke—'it appears that bad news hath arrived.'

'What news?'

'It is—news of Captain Easterbrook.'

'Is the boy . . . is the boy dead?' asked the Admiral.

'Sir, we cannot but suppose so. For he hath lost his ship. But as yet we have not seen the 'Post.'

'No—no,' the landlord again interposed, holding out the 'Post,' which no one would take. 'Gentlemen, stand by me, I beseech you. Sir, the Captain is not dead.'

'Then, poor lad,' said the Admiral, 'he is grievously wounded, and like to die. Our boy,

gentlemen, is grievously wounded, and like to——' Here his voice failed him.

'No, Sir, he is not wounded.'

'Then he is shipwrecked and drowned. Why is the man staring like a stuck pig? Alas! gentlemen, our boy is drowned.' But the Admiral looked uncertain, because the company, now understanding that something out of the common had happened, looked at each other and at the landlord, and spoke not.

'Sirs'—the landlord again offered the news-paper to one after the other, but no one took it —'the news is here printed. Otherwise, God forbid that I should dare to say such a thing. Your Honour, it is here stated that the Captain struck his colours in the very beginning of the action.'

'Struck his colours!' The Admiral caught the arms of his chair, raised himself as quickly as a one-legged man may. 'Struck his colours! Jack struck his colours! Ye lie, ye drunken swab! Ye lie!' With that he delivered so shrewd a blow with his gold-headed stick that, had not the landlord dodged, he would have

been enabled instantly to carry the news into the next world. 'Ye lie, I say!' Here his voice failed him, and his face became purple, and he reeled and would have fallen but Mr. Shelvocke and Captain Petherick caught him and set him in a chair, where he gasped and panted and looked as if he was about to have a fit of some kind. As for the landlord, he stood in a corner, pale and trembling.

'Give me the paper,' said Mr. Brinjes, when the Admiral had somewhat mastered his passion. 'Let us at least read what is here stated.' He read it silently. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'this is a strange business. I understand it not. Here is more than meets the eye. It is a thing hard to understand. I will read it aloud. Courage, Admiral, the story is impossible as it stands.

'"Despatches have been received from Sir Edward Hawke. He reports an affair which, unless later intelligence contradict it, is more discreditable to British honour than anything which has been done since the cowardly flight of Benbow's captains. The frigate 'Calypso,' Captain John Easterbrook, with her consort the 'Reso-

lute,' Captain Samuel Boys, fell in at daybreak with a squadron of the enemy, consisting of three frigates, one of them being the 'Malicieuse.' The names of the other two are not given. The Frenchmen bore away on discovery of the Union Jack, and the British ships gave chase. After some hours the 'Calypso' came up with the 'Malicieuse,' the hindmost of the three, the 'Resolute' being then a quarter of a mile or so astern, though crowding all sail. It is reported by Captain Boys, he being then on his quarter-deck and glass in hand, that the engagement was commenced by the 'Malicieuse' firing a shot from her stern-chaser which struck the 'Calypso'; that then he saw Captain Easterbrook strike his colours with his own hand; that his officers ran about him, and he cut one down; that the Frenchman immediately lowered a boat and boarded the prize, driving the crew below; and that the other two French frigates backed their sails, whereupon he withdrew from the chase, thinking it useless to engage three vessels at once; that he was not pursued; and that he

knows no reason at all why the ship was surrendered without firing a shot. 'Tis thought that the 'Calypso' hath been conveyed to Brest. This account is the more extraordinary by reason of the character for gallantry possessed by Captain Easterbrook, who was one of Captain Lockhart's Lieutenants on board the fighting 'Tartar.'"'

'This is a very strange story,' said Captain Petherick. 'By your leave, Mr. Brinjes, I will not believe it.'

'Thank ye, old friend,' said the Admiral, hoarsely. 'My boy surrender? Never, sir, never. Damme, Mr. Apothecary, wilt thou try to persuade us that such a thing is possible?'

'Nay, Admiral, nay; I do but read what is printed. Lord forbid that I should doubt the boy. What is this? Ay, they have begun already their pestilent verses. 'Twill be just as it was with Admiral Byng, when the journals were full of squibs. Listen now. Oh! they care nothing about truth so long as they can turn a verse and raise a laugh. Listen.'

'"The following lines have been picked up at the Rainbow. 'Tis thought they come from the Temple :—

> The Frenchman crowds all sail in fright,
> The Briton crowds all sail to fight :
> The brave 'Calypso's' gallant tyke
> Claps on all sail in haste to strike.

And these have been recited at Dick's—

> The Captain brave his ship would save,
> And so this great commander
> Cries, 'Heroes, I will scorn to fly
> While I can still surrender.
> Stay, Frenchman, stay : your shot may play
> Too rough among my hearties ;
> I fear no foe : but yet I know
> To strike the better part is."'

'Oh! 'tis a lie—'tis a lie,' the Admiral groaned. 'Gentlemen—my boy, Jack! Gentlemen, I say. . . .'

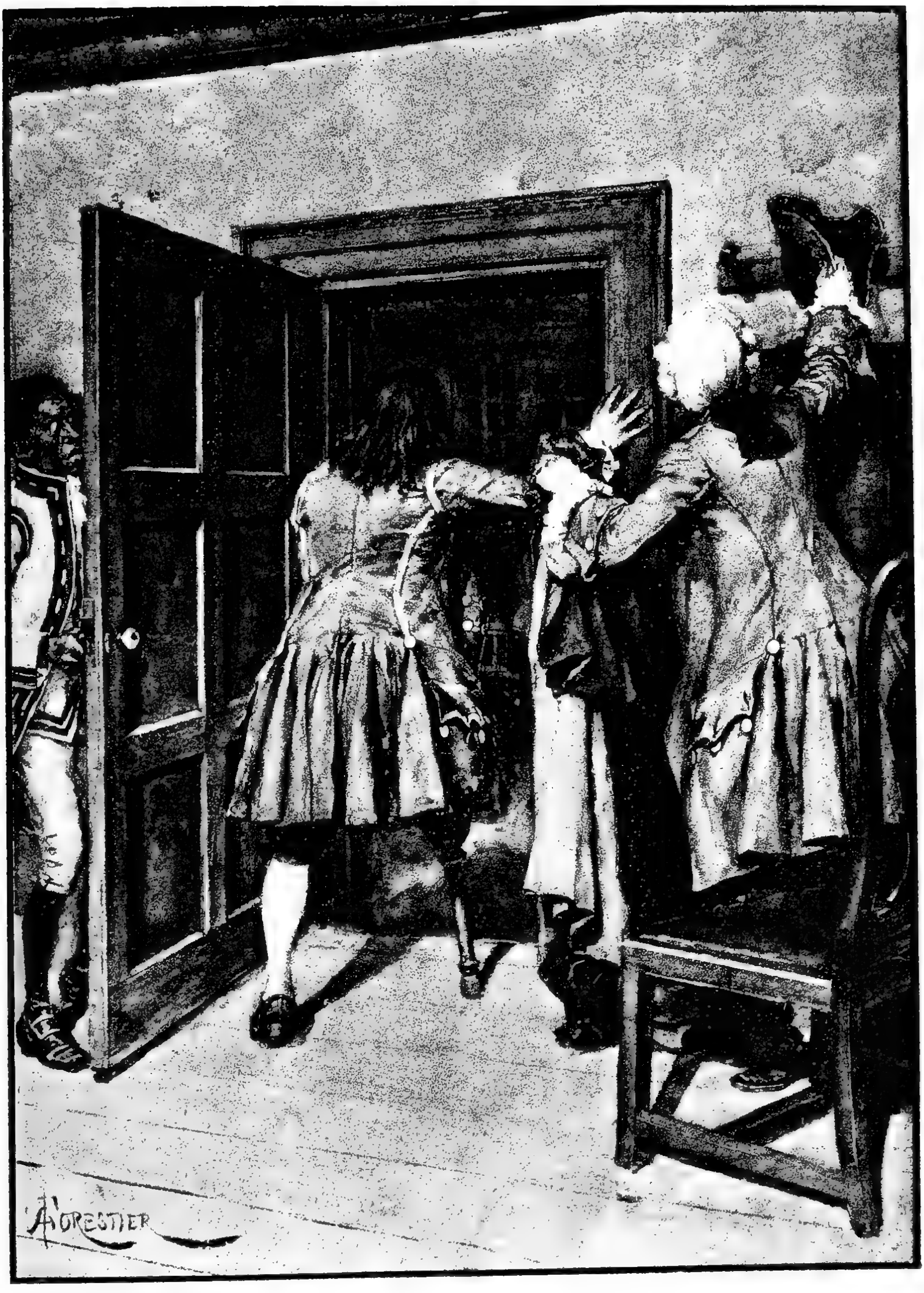
'We cannot believe it, Admiral,' said Captain Petherick. 'Yet it is in the despatches.'

'There is something we are not told,' said Mr. Brinjes. 'But, without doubt, the "Calypso" is taken prisoner, and someone on board struck the colours.'

The Admiral stared about him with amazement and confusion in his eyes. Then he rose slowly. 'I shall go home, gentlemen. I wish you good-night. Someone shall swing for this lie. . . . Someone shall swing.' He moved towards the door, forgetting his hat and cloak, which one of the gentlemen reached for him. 'Someone, I say, shall swing for this—this diabolical lie about my boy Jack. We shall see—damme, I say, we shall see! What, sirrah, the lantern not lit?' Indeed, it was not the duty of the negro to keep the candle burning through the evening; but the Admiral belaboured him so lustily that the fellow roared, and the company trembled lest he should be killed. But a negro's head is hard. Then the Admiral walked away. This was his last night with the Club; he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff.

The gentlemen, without his presence, sat awhile speechless. But the landlord brought in the punch, and they presently filled and lit their pipes and began to whisper.

'Do you think, sir,' asked Mr. Brasil of the



'The Admiral moved towards the door.'

Apothecary, 'do you think that the story may be in any point of it true?'

'Why,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'as for truth, I suppose that is never got at, and this nut is hard to crack. How such a man as Jack Easterbrook could haul down his flag before the action began passes understanding. But then how men like Captain Boys and his officers should be deceived, when only a quarter of a mile distant or thereabouts, one cannot understand either. And that the ship is taken one cannot doubt.'

'If he comes home he will be tried by court-martial, and for cowardice,' said Mr. Shelvocke.

'That is most certain,' said Captain Petherick: 'and if he surrendered cowardly, he will be shot. Gentlemen, this is an event which affects our own honour. For though the boy is no blood relation of any here, he hath been our pupil, so to speak. We have taught him. He is our son in whom we hoped, and in whom we believed. It is not the Admiral alone who is struck. It is this company of honourable

gentlemen who would have maintained to their dying day that Jack Easterbrook could never turn out a coward. Why, a more gallant lad never trod the deck, as witness Captain Lockhart, of the "Tartar," where he served. I say, gentlemen, this affects us all. We are brought to shame by this untoward and unexpected event.'

'Perhaps,' said one of the company, 'the Captain was shot at the outset, and it was the First Lieutenant who hauled down the flag.'

But that seemed impossible, no one could fail to discern Captain Easterbrook at so short a distance, if only on account of his great stature. Besides, Captain Samuel Boys was known for a sober and honest man, who would certainly not invent so grievous a charge against a brother officer.

'Perhaps,' said another, 'the ship was foundering.'

Then they read the statement again, trying to extract from it, if possible, some gleam of hope or doubt. But they found none.

'Gentlemen,' said the Apothecary, 'I hope

I shall not be thought to be a man over-ready to believe this monstrous thing if I submit that it may be true, and that the act was made possible by one of those sudden madnesses which the people believe to be the possession of the Devil. We read of poor women, in such fits, murdering their own tender children; and of husbands beating to death their wives, without a cause; and of learned scholars who have gone forth from their books to hang themselves without any reason for despair. No man is at all times master of his own actions; and doubtless there are in the brain, as in the body, weak places, so that just as one man falleth into an asthma, or a rheumatism, or the gout, by reason of bodily imperfections, so may a man by mental disorder commit acts of false judgment, foolish conclusions, and mad acts for which there is no accounting. Nor can we anticipate or prevent such attacks. I once knew as brave a fellow as ever stepped, to snivel and cry for an hour together: and why? Only because he was sentenced to be hanged. Yet he walked manfully to the gallows in the end. And

another, who fell on his knees and wept aloud because he was to have a tooth out, which he dreaded more than he did the three dozen he had received a month before.'

'Then, you think, sir,' said Captain Petherick, 'that the boy may have been mad?'

'I know not what to think. I tell the company what I have seen. Some acts, I declare, are not consistent with what we know of the man's previous life. What should we think did the Reverend Vicar of St. Paul's suddenly fall to singing a roaring tavern song of Poll and Nan? Yet that would be no whit the worse than for Jack to become suddenly coward. There are some who say that men are thus afflicted by Divine Visitation. That may be. A congestion of the liver and the mounting of vapours to the head may likewise produce such effects. Yet we do not call a liver disease a Divine Visitation. I remember once, being then on the coast of Yucatan, a very singular thing. Landlord, the bowl is out. I say, gentlemen, that I once witnessed a very singular thing. There was a young fellow with us of

five- or six-and-twenty; a daredevil dog who had faced death so often that he feared him no longer, and was looked to lead the way. The enemy showed fight, and we came to close quarters, when the word was given to board. What happened? He leaped upon the enemy's deck with the greatest resolution, and then, to our surprise, he turned tail and fled like a cur, dropping his arms and crying out for fear. We tried that man, gentlemen, when we landed, and we shot him for cowardice, just as Jack Easterbrook will be tried and shot, if he be fool enough to come home. 'Twas a pity, too, for after he was dead we found out the reason of this strange behaviour. He was bewitched by an old woman to revenge her grand-daughter, his sweetheart, who was mad with him on account of his many infidelities. The girl came out and laughed in his face while he was led forth to execution. Afterwards, she confessed the crime to some of the girls; and when they began to talk of it, she took to the woods, where, no doubt, she presently perished. The old woman we punished. The night before she

was executed, I went privily to her and offered her poison, if she would give me her secrets, and especially the secret by which she knew how to prolong life as much as she pleased. But she refused, being an obstinate old woman; and next day the men gave her a bad time, being mad with her. Gentlemen, we are not on the Spanish Main; and there is no witch among us, except Philadelphy, the Admiral's negro woman, who would not, if she could, put Obi on Jack. Yet if this story be true, then I doubt not that our boy was clean off his head, and no longer master of himself, when he struck his flag.'

CHAPTER XL.

HOW THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED.

THE next despatches brought confirmation of the news. There could now be no doubt at all that the 'Calypso' had been surrendered by the Captain, and that without striking a blow. The consternation and shame which fell upon us cannot be described; nay, not upon us only, but upon the whole town of Deptford, to whom Jack was nothing short of a hero.

'There is nothing,' said my father in the next Sunday's sermon, 'there is nothing, my brethren, upon this earth which is stable. Our riches make themselves wings and fly away; disease falls upon the stoutest and strongest of us; old age palsies our limbs; death snatches away the youngest and brightest. Even in the

very spring and heyday of life, when promise is strongest and hope most assured, the qualities of which we are so proud may fail us suddenly, and without warning—so that the brave man may lose his courage, the loyal man become a traitor, and the strong man fall into the weakness of a girl. Remember this, my brethren, and in the day of your strength be humble.' Those who listened applied the words to the disgraced Captain, and hung their heads.

But the Admiral and his household were not in church. They sat at home, the flag half-mast high, Madam and Castilla, by the Admiral's orders, in black, as if in mourning for one who is lately dead.

'He is dead, Luke,' said the brave old man. 'My gallant boy, the son of my old friend, my son-in-law who was to be, is truly dead. How he died, and where, I know not. But he is dead, and his body is occupied by an evil spirit. What? Shall we be ashamed because this cowardly Devil hath struck the colours? 'Tis not our boy. He is dead. Castilla weeps for him; but, as for me, I always looked that

he might die early, as so many others do—being killed in action, or cast away. As yet we know not how he died, or how the Devil was permitted to walk about in his body. Perhaps we shall never learn.' But here he broke off, and choked. 'What an ending! What an ending is here!—truly, what an ending! Why, if one had foreseen it, 'twould have been a Christian act to put a knife into the boy's heart when he came here sixteen years ago; and a joyful thing, had one only known beforehand what would happen, to be hanged for it afterwards.'

I said that I hoped he would be able to write us some words of consolation.

'Consolation? Why, the Captain struck his flag without firing a shot! Consolation? There are some things, my lad, which can never be forgiven or forgotten. Cowardly to surrender is the chief of these. Cowardly! Oh! that it should seem possible to use that word of our boy!'

Then I said that it would be best for him to stay abroad, and never to return to England.

'Ay,' said the Admiral, 'unless he should resolve to come back and be shot. The women say he is bewitched. But who should bewitch him? No: our boy is dead, and some evil spirit is in his body.'

This was the only consolation that the poor old Admiral permitted himself. Yet it did not console. He stayed at home, being so covered with shame that he durst not venture forth, lest the boys should point at him. He told me so; and it went to my heart thus to see this brave old man wounded and bleeding, yet to know no single word of consolation.

'Luke,' said Castilla, 'do not, if you please, mention his name to me. We must resign ourselves to the Heavenly Will. No doubt this affliction hath been designed for some wise end.'

This must always be the Christian's view; yet, in my ignorance, I have sometimes questioned the course of events which thus afflicted and presently destroyed a brave man in his old age, undeserving of this disgrace.

I know not who first started the rumour—

perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes himself—but it was presently spread over all the town, that the Captain was bewitched. And so great was the popular indignation that, had the people known what had passed with Bess Westmoreland, I make no doubt they would have murdered her. Fortunately, there was no suspicion at all. No one had seen them together, or knew that there had been any love-passages between them, or any jealousy. Most certainly they would have murdered her, the women especially being full of wrath against the unknown author of this misfortune.

But I was uneasy—listening to the talk of these termagants, as they gathered in the streets, and cried out what should be done to the witch—lest someone should turn suspicion upon Bess. As for Philadelphy, who would have been suspected, it was known that the Captain was to marry her young mistress, and therefore she could not be the witch. Now, of wise women, who know the properties of simples, and can read the signs of good and bad luck, and tell fortunes by cards, there are

always plenty; but of witches there was in Deptford only one, and of wizards only one, and both of them known to be friends of the Captain.

'It is true, Luke,' said Bess Westmoreland, when I found her in the usual place. 'Do not talk as if it were not true, because I am assured that the news is true. Why, I knew that something terrible was going to fall upon him. Mr. Brinjes says there may be some mistake in the evidence of Captain Boys; but I know better. It is quite true. What will happen next, I know not. But I shall have my lover back again, whatever happens. The fortune always ended in the same way with love at last.'

'Whatever happens, Bess? Why, he is now a prisoner of war, and, unless exchanged, will remain a prisoner till the war is ended. And if he ever return he will be tried and shot.'

'Then he will stay where he is, and send for me,' she replied, as if the recovery of her lover, should that be brought about, would be cheaply purchased at the cost of his honour.

But women know little of man's regard for honour. 'He will send for me; and if it were to the ends of the earth, I would go to him.'

'Bess,' I whispered, 'it is rumoured abroad in the town that he was bewitched. Is there anyone who knows what passed between him and you when last you saw him?'

'No one knows except you, Luke. Aaron knows, but he is away.'

'Then speak to no one about it. Let it not be suspected that you predicted this disaster, or the people, I verily believe, would burn you for a witch, Bess.'

'Why, are they such fools as to think that I would suffer a hair of his head to be touched if I could help it? For Jack loved me once —how he loved me once!—three years ago! And I—oh! I love him always. What do I care what he has done? Let him but hold up his finger to me and I will go to him. I will be his slave. Oh! Luke, I would suffer gladly that he kicked and flogged me daily so that he loved me. What do I care about his disgrace? That touches not me. My Jack will always be

the same to me, whatever people may say of him.'

'My poor Bess,' I said. 'Indeed, he hath a constant mistress. But, my dear, do not look to see him more. I fear we shall never be able to set eyes on his face again, for he cannot show his face among his fellows. The common fellow pays for his sins with a flogging, and when his back is healed, he thinks no more of the matter. But the Captain—look you, Bess—it is a most dreadful thing. For, whatever happens, he can never more sit among honourable men.'

'He shall sit with me, then,' said Bess. 'As for what I told him, the words were put into my head—I know not how. They were a message. I was made to tell him. They were not my words; wherefore I knew that they would come true.'

Thus, while the rest of us were overwhelmed with shame, she who loved him best (because now I clearly understood that Castilla had never loved him so well, else she could not have been so quickly and so easily resigned

to her loss) thought little of the deed and much of the man. Thus it is that a woman may love a man, so that whatever he does, whether he succeed or fail, even if he does disgraceful and shameful things, she will love him steadfastly. In Bess's simple words, he is always the same man for her.

'As for me,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'I am very sure that the lad was bewitched. I know not by whom, because Philadelphy would work all the charms she knows for his help, for Miss Castilla's sake. But bewitched he was. Wherefore, Luke, my lad, I shall wait until we learn where he is at present bestowed, and then I shall send him a letter. He must not look for a return to England at any time, unless he joins himself with the Pretender, and hopes to return with him. But no: he must never return at all. And as for that young man, he is now near forty, and will never come to England again, I take it. But though Jack cannot come back here, I see no reason why we should not go to him; and so we might together set sail for the Southern Seas, and there dig up my treasure, and equip

and man a stout squadron for the harassing of the Spanish fleets.'

'Why, Mr. Brinjes,' I told him, 'you are now an old man—ninety years and more, as you have told us often. Is it for a man of ninety years to brave the hardships of the sea once more?'

'Hardships! Little you know of peaceful sailing among the sunny waters of the islands. There are no hardships and no discomforts. Why, 'twould make me twenty years younger to be back again in the Pacific Ocean and in those latitudes. I should be little more than seventy. What is seventy? A man is still green at seventy: he is in the full vigour of his manhood; there is nothing that I could not do at seventy, ay, and as well as the youngest of them all, save that my limbs were a trifle stiff, and I no longer cared to run and jump. But that stiffness sometimes falls on a man at six-and-thirty, wherefore I could not complain. Seventy! Ah! To be seventy again, with thirty years more to live! And then, if one were so lucky as to fall upon the great secret,

another thirty, and another thirty after that, and so on as long as one chose to live. And that, my lad, I promise you, would be until I understood clearly what was on the other side.' Thus he went on chattering, having almost forgotten how we began to talk: to forget the things of the present day is ever a sign or proof of great age. 'Ah!' he sighed, heavily, 'would to God that I could find myself once more aboard a tight vessel on the Pacific Seas, with plenty of men and lemons, and some music for the lads in the evenings, and, for amusement, taking a ship now and then, and making the Spaniard walk the plank. Jack should be our Captain, and Bess should go with us—I could not go away from Deptford without Bess, and her heart is always set on Jack. Yet, I do not remember any women among the Rovers except Mary Read and Ann Bonny, and they dressed like men, and pretended to be men. They sailed under Captain Rackam, and a brave pair of wenches they were. I dreamed last night that we were all three on the poop of as fine a schooner as one

could wish, bound for the South Seas, by way of the Indian Ocean.'

So we lost our hero. At least so we thought we had lost him. He was taken to a French prison. He would never be so mad as to return to England, where certain death awaited him. We should never see him again. And, as Captain Petherick truly said, we were all ashamed by an act as truly cowardly as ever British sailor committed. The news-papers continued to speak of it; the evidence of Captain Boys was printed in full, and there were more epigrams. And then other things happened; and the loss of the 'Calypso' would have been speedily forgotten but for a surprising and unexpected turn, which was, so to speak, a second act in this tragedy of Jack Easter-brook's end.

Truly surprising and unexpected it was, and the intelligence of it threw us all into an agitation worse, if possible, than the first. For we were assured that the worst was over. The first blow fell upon us like a thunderbolt from

a clear sky, and now we were rising to our feet again (except the Admiral), stunned and confused, yet in a fair way of recovery, as happens in every earthly calamity, else 'twould be impossible to live. The child we love—nay, the woman we love—dies, yet behold the sun rises and sets, and presently the daily life goes on as before, and the loss is partly forgotten. Suppose, however, the woman was not dead, but came to life again, only to die with more cruel suffering and with shame!

What happened, in a word, was this.

The crew of the prize had orders to take the 'Calypso' to Brest, which was the nearest French port. They ordered their prisoners below to the quarters always designed for men in that unhappy position—namely, the forward portion of the cockpit, where they have to sit in gloom, lit only by one great ship's lantern all day and all night, save for such times as they are allowed on deck for fresh air, in gangs and small companies. When the Englishmen were driven below, and the prize crew appointed, the 'Malicieuse' parted company,

and the 'Calypso' was left to make her own way to Brest.

'On the second day,' we read in the 'London Post,' 'the prisoners rose, and became again masters of the ship, which was brought into Spithead under the First Lieutenant, the Captain being kept a prisoner in his cabin. This extraordinary reversal of fortune, and other circumstances attending the case, have excited the greatest interest. The Lords Commissioners have ordered the ship to be brought to Deptford, where the court-martial on Captain Easterbrook will be held.'

As is usual in news published by authority in the 'Gazette,' and copied by other newspapers, there were no particulars of the manner in which the ship was recovered, except that she was navigated by the First Lieutenant. Had the crew, then, mutinied against their Captain, and confined him to his cabin? If not, how was he a prisoner?

It was impossible for me, who knew the whole circumstances of the case, not to feel that in this surprising reversal of fortune and

in the ordering of the court-martial, there was a direct interposition of the hand of Providence, such as may well make the guilty tremble. To lose life, and honour as well, which is dearer than life, as a penalty for broken vows, seems a terrible punishment, and out of proportion to the offence. But it is not every inconstant lover who hath expressly called down upon his own head, as Jack did, the wrath of God in case of his inconstancy. Man cannot with impunity call upon the name of the Lord. There is a story of one who learned how to draw the lightnings out of Heaven, but he drew them upon himself, and so perished. Was not this the fate of Jack Easterbrook?

Alas! we were now wholly without hope. For needs must that he be tried; and he was condemned already, and as good as shot. While he was prisoner with the French, his life at least was safe; and if he chose never to return, he could certainly never be tried; and so his case would be in the course of time forgotten. But now he must be tried, and he must be condemned.

'But,' said Mr. Brinjes, 'he shall call me as a witness; and I will prove from books and from mine own experience that there have happened many cases of sudden madness, and that in such an access or seizure a man is not master of himself. And those who have travelled much in countries where the sun is hot, and especially those who have wandered, as the boy did, among savages, with insufficient food, and perhaps no covering for the head, are more than others liable to such fits—instances of which I can produce. It will also be set forth that the Captain, not long before he sailed, received so heavy a blow upon the head that he was carried senseless through the town and across the river. Such a blow may of itself produce the effect of sudden madness. Men who have proved themselves brave sailors and fond of fight do not, unless from this cause, suddenly become cowardly. Why, he crowded all sail to get within range of the enemy.'

'Yet he struck his flag,' I said. 'Is every man who runs away, after marching resolutely

to meet the enemy, to plead that he was smitten with a sudden madness?'

As for the value of such evidence, I know not what it would have availed, but I think it would have availed nothing in the eyes of the officers who formed the Court. But, as you will presently see, it never was produced. Perhaps the knowledge of what he could testify gave the Apothecary an inward assurance which comforted him. For he showed no alarm, and maintained stoutly that his own evidence, with the prisoner's previous good conduct, would get Jack acquitted, if it did not get him reinstated in command.

But Courts, whether martial or civil, do not thus examine into motives and causes. If a Judge were to hear why a pocket came to be picked, or by what train of circumstances an honest man has been turned into a rogue, there would be no punishment at all, but rather general commiseration for sin, and forgiveness of all sinners, on the score of human weakness and the strength of temptation.

As for Bess, when she heard that the

Captain was a prisoner and on his way to meet his trial, she said nothing, except that whatever happened the end was certain; and she waited. Her wrath and fierceness were all gone; she was now gentle and calm, though her cheek was pale, and round her eyes a black ring, by which I knew that she slept little and thought of Jack continually.

CHAPTER XLI.

HOW THE 'CALYPSO' CAME HOME AGAIN.

O! when we awoke in the morning, the 'Calypso' herself was lying in the river, moored nearly opposite to the mouth of the dock.

I made haste to the King's Yard, in order to hear the news, and there, as I expected, I found a little knot of gentlemen, including Captain Petherick, the chief officer of the Yard, and a few who, like myself, were brought thither by anxiety and curiosity. They were earnestly conversing with the First Lieutenant of the ship. He was a man whose hair was now grown completely grey (wherefore he no longer used powder), being some fifty-five years of age, but for want of interest never having got any higher. By birth he was a Scotchman;

he had, like many of his countrymen, a hard and strongly marked face, and his manner of speech was hard and slow, so that, though he had such a tale to tell as surely never was heard before, his manner of telling it never varied even in the most astonishing parts of his narrative, except that now and then he broke off to express his own opinion on the matter. We presently, however, discovered that he felt great commiseration for the unhappy fate of his Captain, young enough to be his son, and that he held much the same view as the townspeople—namely, that there must be witchcraft at the bottom of the affair. We learned also that the recapture of the ship would now present a very different complexion, being due, not as had been supposed, to a general rising of the crew, but to the most astonishing courage of the Captain himself, and the display of reckless daring in a singlehanded attack upon the prize crew, such as one had never read of or heard of before.

As regards the striking of the colours, there was nothing new in what we learned. The

Captain with his own hand did certainly haul down the flag without firing a shot. Against that damning and capital fact nothing could be said. But as for what followed, you shall hear the First Lieutenant's story.

'When the Captain struck his colours, which he did with his own hand, the men looking on in sheer amazement, I myself ran to him, crying, "For God's sake, Captain! for God's sake, Sir, consider what you do!" But the Captain drew his hanger and slashed at me, so that, though the flat of the sword only struck me, I fell senseless. Then, as I have since been told, those officers whose place was on deck stood back, terrified by the wild looks and furious gestures of the Captain. So great was the authority which he possessed, that not a man among them all dared so much as to murmur. Then the Frenchmen boarded us, and all, except the Captain, who was suffered to remain on deck, and myself, because I was senseless, were bundled below, and the hatches clapped down. When I presently recovered, I too was allowed to remain above. Now, for two nights and two

days, the Captain sat on the quarter-deck upon the trunnion of a carronade, his hat off, his hands upon his knees, his eyes blood-red, his face pale. Gentlemen,' cried the First Lieutenant, breaking off suddenly at this point, 'twould have moved a heart of stone only to look upon the Captain in this misery of shame. Despair was in his eyes as he turned them from the sea to the ship, and from the ship to the sea. As for what the men think, there is but one opinion: that it was the work of the Devil. He was bewitched, or possessed. I know not if we have the right to try a man for an act done under demoniac possession, which we know to be sometimes permitted. But the madness had now left him, and he was in his right mind again.'

There was not one of those present who heard this with a dry eye. But more moving things still were to follow.

'It was on the third day after the surrender,' the First Lieutenant told us, 'and in the forenoon, the usual guard being set, the French officers and sailors all armed, and their

Commander on the quarter-deck. In the waist was gathered together a small party of prisoners taking their spell of fresh air ; they were lolling in the sun, or looking over the bulwarks in the hope of discovering an English flag. Nothing was further from their thoughts than an attempt to recapture the "Calypso." On that point there could be no doubt. They talked with each other in low voices, being very much dejected at the position of their affairs, and the prospect of a French prison, and they looked at their Captain, who sat bareheaded on the quarter-deck. He, too, like themselves, was unarmed, and he sat without moving or making any sign of life.

'Suddenly he sprang to his feet and caught the French officer, a much smaller man than himself, by the throat, tore his sword from him, and cut him down. The two sentinels rushed upon him with their bayonets, but he lightly leapt aside, and cut them down too. Then, armed with the sword, he sprang into the waist, and crying, "Men of the 'Calypso,' to the rescue of your ship!" he attacked the Frenchmen,

cutting them down and driving all before him like a madman.

'There is a tall stout fellow aboard, one of our Marines. He was on deck at the time, and was the first who recovered presence of mind (the rest being clean taken aback by the suddenness of the thing). He seized a rammer and sprang to the side of the Captain, fighting with him and protecting him. Mark you, if it had not been for that brave fellow the Captain would have been killed a dozen times over—as I doubt not he wished to be, seeing the reckless way in which he attacked the enemy. Nay, I wonder that in spite of this help he was not killed, seeing that they fired their pistols in his very face, and thrust at him with bayonets, and cut at him with swords; but all in vain. A fine sight it was, and such as will never be witnessed again by any of us, to see this hero fighting the whole of the prize crew single-handed, save for the Marine, who seemed to have no other thought than to protect his Captain, and laid about him with his rammer as if it had been a quarterstaff.

'Well, gentlemen, you may be very sure it was not very long before the rest of the English sailors on deck joined in with a true British cheer, fighting with whatever weapons they could pick up—namely, one with a marlingspike, one with a hammer, one with his fist, one with a dead Frenchman's bayonet, and so on, until in a few minutes we had the satisfaction of driving our conquerors under hatches, calling up our crew, and running up the Union Jack. The Captain it was who hauled it up with his own hand. His face was black with powder, and streaked with blood, though he had not received a scratch; his hands were red with blood, and his sword streaming; on the deck lay a dozen dead and wounded, though some of them only stunned with the Marine's rammer. When the flag was up, the Captain saluted it, and called on his men to give three cheers, which they did with a will. After that he ordered a double ration of rum, and every man to his duty.

'Then he turned to me. "Mr. Macdonald," he said, "I would to God your Captain was

lying dead among those poor wretches," pointing to the slain. I told him to take courage, because it was by this act, and his alone, that the vessel was recaptured. Then he hesitated awhile, and fetched a sigh as if his heart was breaking.

'"Whose hand hauled down the flag?" he asked.

'I waited to hear what more he had to say.

'"Where is the man," he asked, "who fought beside me just now? I mean the man who interposed to save my life?"

'I called the man, who stepped forward and saluted.

'"So," said the Captain, "'tis my old friend. Sirrah, twice hast thou endeavoured to take my life, out of revenge. Once hast thou saved it. Thou hast thy revenge at last, and in full measure. Return to duty."

'I know not, gentlemen,' continued the First Lieutenant, 'what the Captain meant by those words, for the man saluted and stepped back to his place, making no reply, either by look or speech. Then the Captain gave me his last orders. "You will take the command of

this ship, Sir," he said. "You will enter in the Captain's log a full account of the circumstances connected with the surrender and the recapture of the 'Calypso.' Disguise nothing, Sir. Nothing must be omitted. Write that the Captain hauled down the flag. Write that the Captain cut down the First Lieutenant, who would have remonstrated. Write that there was not a single shot fired, and the enemy carried less weight of metal and a smaller crew."

'"With respect, Sir," I told him, "I shall also write that the Captain also retook the vessel single-handed."

'"Write further—that the Captain gave over the command to you, with instructions to take the ship to Spithead, the whereabouts of the Admiral not being known, there to report on what has happened, and to await the instructions of my Lords the Commissioners."

'Gentlemen,' the First Lieutenant concluded, 'I obeyed orders. I sailed to Spithead, and reported the circumstances of the case. The Commissioners have ordered me to bring the ship round to Deptford, the Captain aboard her, prisoner, waiting his court-martial.

We hope that, though he certainly struck the colours, his subsequent conduct may save his life. For most certainly he was mad when he did it, or bewitched, or possessed of a devil. But he is mad no longer. I forgot to say, gentlemen, that although for two days he refused to take anything, and I verily believe he intended to starve himself to death, he has since eaten and drunk heartily.'

This was the story as the First Lieutenant told it.

Now, when we heard it we were in a doubt what to do. For to neglect the unhappy prisoner altogether would seem heartless, whereas, to try and see him, unless he manifested a desire to see us, would seem like intrusion. He sat in his cabin, we heard, all day, and at night, when it was dark, walked upon the quarter-deck. He spoke with no one save the First Lieutenant, and made no reference to the approaching trial—the day for which they expected would be fixed very shortly.

First, however, my father wrote to him, and

asked if he would wish to see him; but received a letter thanking him, indeed, and putting off his visit until, the writer said, he should be forced to contemplate the near approach of Death. Next, Mr. Brinjes sent a message that he wished to see him as his physician (a title which he assumed when he pleased); but the Captain returned word that he had never been in better health.

As for myself, I waited for some days, not venturing to intrude upon his suffering, yet desirous of seeing him. At last I wrote a letter, begging him to tell me if I could do anything for him. To which he replied that he would take it kindly if I would come aboard and see him in his cabin. I obeyed with a sinking heart, for, indeed, what consolation could I administer, or with what countenance could I greet him, or could I pretend that he was not overwhelmed with shame?

When I went on board, I was astonished to find, acting as sentry at the top of the companion, no other than Aaron Fletcher. I knew not that he was on board the 'Calypso.'

Strange, indeed, that he should now be mounting guard as Marine over the man whom he had many times fought, and twice tried to murder. He made no sign of recognition as I passed him.

Jack was in his cabin, sitting at his window, leaning his head upon his hand, and gazing upon the river, with the crowd of craft upon it. He turned his head when I opened the door, and rose to meet me.

'Luke,' he said, 'canst take the hand of a coward wretch who hath surrendered his ship without a blow? Nay—nay—lad; tears will not help, and I am not worth a tear, or anything now but to be shot like a cur, and rolled up in a bit of sacking, and so tossed into the water, and forgotten.'

I asked after his health, but he put me off.

'Health?' he cried. 'What matters my health? If you can pick up a smallpox, or a galloping consumption, or a fever, and send it to me—the worse the complaint, the better I shall like it; or if Mr. Brinjes, who can cause all diseases, will send me one that will suddenly

tear out my heart, or stop my breath, it would be very much to the point at the present juncture. My health? Why, as the Devil will have it, it was never better.' He laughed. 'Go tell Mr. Brinjes, or his swivel-eyed assistant, to make me up a disease or two in that saucepan of his that is always on the hob. 'Tis a crafty old man, and first cousin, I verily believe, to the Devil.'

He paused awhile, thinking what next to tell me.

'Tell the Admiral . . . No, not yet; after my death thou shalt tell him all the truth, which I will tell thee directly. I cannot write to that good old man; yet, Luke, I must send him some message. Therefore: . . . but no, there are no words that I can send him. I cannot ask his forgiveness, because he can never forgive me. I cannot thank him for all his kindness, because I am not worthy now so much as to send a word of gratitude. Let be, let be. When I am dead thou shalt tell him the truth. As for Castilla, she must forget me. Tell her that, Luke. I am certain that she

will soon console herself. She never loved me as poor Bess used to love me. There is Mr. Brinjes—tell him—why, tell him that he must look for another sailor to steer his ship among the islands of the Southern Seas.'

'Jack,' I said, 'it is terrible.'

'Yes; it is terrible. It is very terrible, lad. But it must be endured. Trust me, that I shall not stand snivelling before the file of Marines at the end. That is, unless there be another——' Here he paused, and in his eyes there was apparent a look of such terror as I have never since seen in any man's eyes, while his cheeks turned white, and drops stood upon his brow. 'Unless,' he said again, 'there come another——' Here he broke off again. 'Luke,' he said, 'if at the end I die craven, know of a surety that I die unforgiven, and that my soul is lost. But it cannot be that death will not atone.' So he paced his cabin once or twice, and then, becoming more calm, he sat down again. 'Luke, dear lad, I wished to see thee, but only thee, for the present. I have much

to say. And first—of Bess. Do you know the words she said to me before I sailed?'

'I know them. Bess told me herself.'

'Does any other person know them?'

'No one, I believe.'

'Let her hold her tongue, then, lest they take her for a witch. Why, I know full well that she is no witch; and as for those words, they were spoken by her, but yet were not her own. I laughed when I heard them. The second time I heard them I laughed no longer. And now I will tell thee the whole truth, Luke; but keep it to thyself until I am dead, when I wish thee—nay, I charge thee—to tell the Admiral and thy father. I crowded all sail in pursuit of the enemy; I prepared for action with as light a heart as a man can have who has a stout ship and a lusty crew. My guns they were loaded, and my men were at quarters, every man stripped to the skin, a good ration of rum served round, and as hearty a spirit as ever animated a British crew. I was as certain of making a prize of the "Malicieuse" as I am now certain of being tried and sentenced to death.

Suddenly, we being by this time well within range, and our men prepared to give the enemy a broadside, a shot from the Frenchman struck our bow, and sent the splinters flying. Then there came upon me a kind of dizziness, and a voice shouted—yea, shouted in my ears—though none but me heard it. . . . "Thou shalt be struck where thou shalt feel the blow most deeply." I tell thee the truth, Luke. But tell no one, lest they seize poor Bess for a witch. Something—I know not what—caught my hand, and dragged me—whether I would or no—yea, compelled me—to the mainmast, and placed the halliards in my hand, and forced me to haul down the flag. I know not very well what happened afterwards; my men, I believe, were all smitten with stupid amazement, and made no resistance: how should they when the flag was struck? They tell me that I cut down the First Lieutenant. Thank God I did no more than stun him! And presently, when I came to myself, I was sitting on a carronade, and the ship was a prize, and the French Commander was on the quarter-deck.'

'But you recaptured the ship?'

'Why, 'twas a desperate attempt. I thought first that I would starve myself to death. But a man does not like to kill himself. And then, seeing the Frenchmen on the deck, and some of my lads for'ard under the sentries, I thought to make them kill me. Alas! they were not suffered to kill me. Some of my men were wounded, and a good many of the Frenchmen knocked o' the head; but I came out of the fight without a scratch, and the ship was ours again. That is my story, lad, in its truth.'

What could a man say in consolation to a man thus afflicted? Was there ever a worse case? My father, for his part, found the case of Job worse, 'because,' he said, 'not only did the Patriarch lose wife and children, and substance and health, but he also lost that which made the patriarchal life more desirable than any which hath followed it—namely, the daily walk with God, compared with which a man's reputation among his fellows is naught indeed.'

'Tell Bess,' Jack went on, 'what hath happened. Let her know that she is revenged,

and I am punished. She did not desire my punishment. It will grieve the poor, tender creature, who always loved me better than I deserved. Yet it is the punishment—nay, I know it now—it is the punishment of GOD Himself.'

He then told me, what indeed I knew already, the history of his passion for Bess, which was as brief as it was violent, sparing himself not at all.

'Never,' he swore, 'was a man more madly in love with any woman than I with Bess, and never, I am sure, did woman love man better than she loves me. I confess, lad, that I made her a thousand promises the most sacred I knew, even upon the Holy Bible, that I would never forget her, but would marry her when I returned. The man Brinjes was witness a dozen times to these protestations. As for him, he is, I think, a devil. For he egged her on to meet me as often as I wished in his own house; and he laughed when I swore constancy, telling me, when she was not present, that I knew the lesson as well as if I were five-and-thirty, instead

of four-and-twenty, and that every sailor was the same, but I the most fortunate of all, because I had so beautiful a girl. I meant not, however, Luke, to deceive her. I intended when I sailed away to keep my word. I was full of love to her. Yet, which is strange, when we had been at sea for two or three months, I thought of her no longer. When I came home with the prize I declare that I had clean forgotten her; and when I saw her, I looked upon her no longer with love, and wondered how I could ever have loved her.'

'Poor Bess!'

'It is strange, Luke, since I took the ship again, the image of the girl hath returned to my heart. I have thought upon her daily, and I remember once more all the things that passed between us while I was waiting for my appointment to the "Tartar." Poor Bess! She deserved a better lover. How could I ever forget her brave black eyes? See, Luke!' He drew up his sleeve and showed his left arm—he had forgotten when last he exhibited that tattoo.

'See, lad, her name is ever before me. Yes; a better lover she deserved.'

'She desires no better lover, Jack.'

'What?' he asked. 'Doth she not curse my very name?'

'Nay; she hath never cursed thee, Jack. She loves thee still: she hath always loved thee.'

'A woman cannot love a man who is disgraced.'

'Why? She loves the man: it is not his honour or his reputation she loves. That I have heard, but I have never understood it, concerning women, before; but now I perceive it very plainly. It is strange to us, because a man cannot love a woman without thinking of her beauty; and so we believe that a woman cannot love a man without thinking of his honour and reputation, his strength and his name. Jack, will you see this poor girl?—will you let her come to you?—and tell her kindly, in your old way, that you love again, as in the past time, and so heal her bleeding heart?'

'See her? Truly, I never thought,' said Jack, 'that she would any more come to me. I thought that she must be like Aaron Fletcher —only anxious to see me swing. Why, if the poor child can find any comfort or happiness in coming here, let her come, in God's name. As for me, dear lad, there is a load upon my heart which I thought would be with me till my death. But if she will forgive me, I think that load will be removed, and I can die with easier mind. Poor Bess! she will but get her lover in time to see him die. My heart bleeds for her! Go quick—bring her to me. Let me at least ask her forgiveness.'

You may be sure that I lost no time in taking this fond message to Bess.

I looked that she would burst into weeping and sobbing. But she did not.

'I knew,' she said, 'that I should get my lover back. Now care I for nothing more. For if he must die, so must I die also. Death itself shall not have power—no—death shall have no power to separate us. On the day that he dies shall I die too. He loves me again.

Why—do you think I care what may happen to either of us, since he loves me still?'

I led her on board, and took her to the Captain's cabin, but at the door I turned away, and so left them alone.

Oh! behind that closed door what prayers and vows were uttered! what tears were shed! what tender embraces were exchanged! when, in the presence of Shame and Death, those hapless lovers met again!

CHAPTER XLII.

OF THE COURT-MARTIAL.

NEARLY all that follows is matter of history, and may be read in the gazettes and papers of the day. Yet for the sake of completing the history, it shall be set forth in order.

The court-martial was appointed to be held on board the 'Calypso,' on the forenoon of Monday, February 2.

On that day it was accordingly held, the Hon. John Cheveril, Rear-Admiral of the White and Admiral of the Port, being the President. The Court consisted of Captains Richard Orde, Frederick Drake, Saltren Willett, Peter Denis, and Joshua Rowley. Captain Petherick should also have sat, but he begged to be excused, on the ground of personal friend-

ship with the defendant. He was present, however, and sat at the back of the court, with as sad a countenance as ever I beheld. (As for our Admiral, he was in his bedroom with an attack of the gout, which even Mr. Brinjes could not cure.) The court was thrown open to all. Few of the friends of the accused officer were present, but there was a great throng of people, not only from Deptford Town, but also from London. Truly, a court-martial on whose decision rests the honour, if not the life, of a man, is a species of judicial investigation which strikes awe upon the beholder, even more than the aspect of the judge, jury, and counsel in a civil court, the solemnity of the occasion being heightened and set off by the uniforms of the Judges and the naked weapons of the sentries and guards.

The Court was opened by the Deputy Judge-Advocate. He was only an attorney of Deptford, by name Richard Pendlebury, but he wore a black gown over his coat, and, being provided with a full wig, which might have been proper even to a serjeant-at-law, and wear-

ing much lace to his bosom and his sleeves, and being a big burly gentleman with a full round voice, he looked as full of authority as a King's Counsel. He began the proceedings by reading the warrant of the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, empowering the Admiral to assemble courts-martial. This done, the President ordered that Captain Easterbrook should be brought before the Court. My heart beat fast and my throat choked when he appeared, bearing himself proudly, but with pale cheek, dressed, if one may say so, like a bride for her wedding, wearing his best uniform, his richest lace, and white leather gloves. Never, surely, did officer of the King's Navy bear himself more gallantly. Once only I saw his cheek flush scarlet. 'Twas when, in the old familiar way, he clapped his hand to his side for the adjustment of his sword. Alas! he had no sword. That had been taken from him, and was now lying on the table before the President, the hilt towards the prisoner. Then he bowed to his judges and stood upright, and, to outward show, calm and

collected, though a tempest of shame and despair was raging within.

Then the Deputy Judge-Advocate administered the oath to the members of the Court and took it himself in the form prescribed, after which he read the charge against the defendant, as follows:

'Gentlemen,—The charge against Captain John Easterbrook, Commander of the "Calypso," here present before your honourable Court, is that on the 4th day of December, 1759, he did cowardly and treacherously surrender and yield up his ship to the enemy, and he is here to answer this charge accordingly.'

He then read the Fifteenth of the Articles of War, as follows:

'Every person in or belonging to the fleet who shall desert to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, or shall run away with any of His Majesty's ships or vessels of war, or any ordnance, ammunition, stores, or provision belonging thereto, to the weakening of the service, or shall yield up the same, cowardly or treacherously, to the enemy, pirate, or rebel, being

convicted of any such offence by the sentence of the court-martial, shall suffer death.'

These preliminaries being completed, the Deputy Judge-Advocate proceeded to call his witnesses, and to each in turn administered an oath which is more awful than that used in the civil courts, because it lays upon the witness an obligation to reveal everything that he knows concerning the case. The form is this:

'I, A. B., do most solemnly swear that in the evidence I shall give before the Court respecting the present trial I will, whether demanded of me by question or not, and whether favourable or unfavourable to the prisoner, declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, GOD!'

The deposition of the officers had already been taken at Portsmouth for the information of the Lords Commissioners, and in every case these were first read aloud, and then confirmed by the witness, who added what he chose, and answered such questions as were put to him. And in the putting of these questions it seemed to me as if the Deputy Judge-Advocate was

desirous of pressing and dwelling upon every fact which might make the crime appear blacker, and of concealing or passing over every fact which made in favour of the accused.

The first witness called was Lieutenant Colin Macdonald, First Lieutenant of the 'Calypso.'

His deposition was short, and was as follows:

'At daybreak on the morning of December the 4th, being then in company with the frigate "Resolute," Captain Boys, we sighted three ships, which we presently made out to be a squadron of three French frigates, apparently of about the same armament as ourselves. They bore away at sight of us, as not wishing to fight. Captain Easterbrook gave the word to crowd all sail and up hammocks, the wind being then fresh and nearly aft and the sea lively, but the ship sailing free and not lying down, so that all her ports could be opened and all her guns fired. We presently found that we gained upon the Frenchmen, and about noon we were nearly come up with the "Malicieuse," the slowest

of the three, the "Resolute" being then half a mile or so astern, and the other two French ships about as much ahead of us. We were by this time cleared for action, the men at their quarters, and everything reported in readiness, looking for nothing but a close engagement, and a pretty hot one, with the three ships. The Captain's plan, he told me, was to range alongside of the enemy, pour in his broadside, grapple, and board, thinking that the "Resolute" would do the like, and so we might capture the squadron. And this we could have done, having faster vessels than the enemy, and Captain Easterbrook being, as I take it, the smartest handler of a ship in the service, though so young a man. But the Frenchman was not disposed to allow of this, if he could help it. Therefore, he began to let fly with the stern-chasers, being, like most of his nation, amply provided with these helps to running away. His first shot knocked away part of our figure-head, the splinters flying about the deck; but no one harmed. Just then, to our utmost consternation, the Captain

turned pale, and ran to the mainmast, where, with his own hands, he began to lower the colours. I ran to him, crying, "Captain, for God's sake, consider what you are doing!" Whereupon he drew his sword, and cut me down over the head, but, fortunately, with the flat of the weapon only, else I had been a dead man. And I knew no more until the business was ended, and we were all prisoners.'

Being asked by the Deputy Judge-Advocate what preparations had been made for an engagement, he replied that nothing was omitted that is customary on such an occasion; that they had ample time during the chase, and that no ship ever went into action better prepared. Immediately on sighting the enemy the bo's'n and his mates piped to stow hammocks; the carpenter and his mates were ready with their mauls and plugs; the gunner and his quarter-gunners examined and reported on all the cannon. When the ship was within a mile of the enemy the drum beat to quarters. Then every man stripped to the waist, and repaired to his proper place; a ration of rum was served

out; the hatches were laid; the Marines were drawn up on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le; lastly, the guns were cast loose, the tompions withdrawn, and the guns loaded and run out at all the ports. In one word, there was no point omitted that a Commander who knows his business would neglect, and everything in such order as the most resolute captain could desire.

Being asked further, if the enemy's consorts showed an intention of taking part in the fight, the Lieutenant replied that he was not prepared to state positively, but he believed that one of them backed her sails, while the other appeared to be hauling her wind; but he repeated that it was the Captain's design to neglect these vessels while he took the 'Malicieuse' by boarding, and afterwards to engage her consorts with the help of the 'Resolute.'

Being further pressed upon the distance of the 'Calypso' from the 'Malicieuse' when the Captain surrendered, he replied that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the 'Calypso' was no more than a hundred and fifty yards astern

of the 'Malicieuse,' and gaining rapidly. Being asked what was the posture of the enemy so far as could be discerned, he replied the men were at quarters, and ready for action, but that all sail was crowded, and that the Frenchman, it was quite certain, had no stomach for the fight, and would gladly have got clear off.

At this point of the evidence, Captain Easterbrook was asked if he had any questions to put to the witness. He replied that he had none, and that to the best of his knowledge the evidence given by Lieutenant Macdonald was true in every particular—a statement which made the Court look serious, and troubled the mind of the Deputy Judge-Advocate, because there is nothing which these gentlemen desire more than to fight a stubborn case; whereas, if an officer pleads guilty, and throws himself upon the mercy of the Court, he has no chance to show his cleverness.

'With permission of the Court,' said the First Lieutenant, 'I will now give evidence as to the recapture of the ship.'

'I submit to the Court,' said the Deputy

Judge-Advocate, 'that the recapture of the ship has nothing to do with the charge against Captain Easterbrook—namely, that he did cowardly and treacherously yield up his vessel.'

'Gentlemen,' said the Lieutenant, 'with respect. If the ship had not been recaptured the Court could not have been held. And if it had not been for the Captain the ship would never have been recaptured. For he did a thing which I venture to maintain no other man in the service would have done, when he engaged, single-handed, the whole of the crew in charge of the prize.'

So the Court conferred together, whispering, and the President ordered the witness to proceed. Whereupon the Deputy Judge-Advocate sat down and put his hands in his pockets, and gazed upwards as if this part of the evidence did not concern him.

The account which the Lieutenant gave of the retaking of the ship was exactly the same which he had already given to the Commissioner of the Yard, Captain Petherick. It need not, therefore, be repeated here. Suffice it to

say that at the recital there was not a face in court which was not suffused with emotion, and as for myself, I thought that surely after so gallant an exploit his sword would be returned to him.

'Gentlemen,' concluded the First Lieutenant, ''twas the most gallant deed I have ever witnessed. Only by a miracle, and by his own valour did the Captain escape death. There were on deck thirty Frenchmen, all armed, and he with nothing but the sword which he tore from the French Commander. And to back him only a dozen unarmed men, who, to tell the truth, for I was among them, were taken by surprise, and would never have plucked up heart save for the example of the Captain. The first man to join him was a Marine, named Aaron Fletcher, who seized a rammer, and, armed with this weapon alone, stood by the Captain, playing a man's part, indeed; but for him, the Captain would have been cut down a dozen times. But, gentlemen, that the ship was recaptured is due to nobody but to the desperate valour of the Captain himself.'

The Court asked Captain Easterbrook whether he had any questions to put on this head, but he had none. Wherefore, Lieutenant Macdonald stepped aside, and made way for the next witness.

Then the Second Lieutenant of the ship was called, and he gave evidence that he was at his station on the main deck when the action began, and testified to the disgust of the men when they learned that the ship was surrendered. This was the more astonishing to them, as their Captain had the reputation of uncommon courage. At first the men refused to believe that the vessel was surrendered, and called upon each other to fight it out.

The Third Lieutenant gave similar evidence, adding that, had not the men been fully convinced of the Captain's bravery and judgment, there would have been a mutiny on board; and that they thought the ship must be sinking at least, or dangerously on fire, or that it was some stratagem, counterfeit, or design by which the Captain thought to fool the enemy, and that they looked at each other and laughed

aloud, waiting for the word to lay the guns, and fire. Further, that the enemy did not believe it possible that a British ship should thus cowardly be yielded up, and continued to fire upon the 'Calypso,' the shot passing through the rigging and the sails, but doing no further mischief. Nor did the men believe that the ship was surrendered until the French boat came alongside and the Captain gave the word to back the sails and lay down arms, which they all did with a very bad grace, yet still persuaded that something fatal had happened to the ship, and that the colours were struck to save their lives.

The Lieutenant of Marines deposed that his men were drawn up in readiness on the quarter-deck and fo'ks'le, and stated plainly that he had no doubt of the issue, because the Frenchmen had only one thought—namely, to get away; and, in his opinion, it had been the Captain's intention to attack and take all three ships, with the help of the 'Resolute'; and that nothing in the world had ever surprised him more than the strange behaviour of the

Captain, from whom so much had been expected.

Captain Easterbrook declined to ask any questions of these witnesses. Was he, then, going to make no attempt at a defence?

They called the Purser, who put in the Captain's log-book, which is always done on these trials, I am told, but I know not why. And then I thought we should surely proceed to the defence, because there could be no doubt of the main fact—namely, that the Captain had certainly struck the colours.

But they delayed the case in order to call the Master, who confirmed the First Lieutenant's evidence as to the preparations for engaging the enemy; and the Gunner, who also confirmed the evidence; and the bo's'n and the carpenter, who added little to the evidence already before the Court, except the fact that when the men were under hatches and knew what had been done, the swearing and cursing of the crew were strong enough to lift the decks.

'Gentlemen,' said the Deputy Judge-Advo-

cate, 'there is no other evidence before the Court.'

'Stay,' said the President, 'call the Marine of whose conduct in the recapture of the ship Lieutenant Macdonald hath spoken.'

So they called Aaron Fletcher.

When this witness stepped forward, looking, it must be confessed, a much smarter and finer man in his scarlet coat than he ever looked as a landsman, Jack's face flushed. It was his fate never to be out of reach of this man's animosity. Twice had Aaron tried to take his life, when that was most worth having. Once he had saved his life when he himself had most ardently desired to lose it. Now he was present to give evidence in the hour of his open humiliation.

'I thought,' he told me afterwards, 'that I had drained the whole cup. But the bitterest drop was when that man stood before me, as if Bess, poor girl! had not yet forgiven me, and had sent her old lover to gloat over my discomfiture. She hath forgiven me, however; therefore I need not have been troubled.'

The Court ordered the man to be sworn, and bade him relate all that he knew concerning the affair, and particularly as to the retaking of the ship from the French.

'I was on the fo'ks'le,' said Aaron, speaking boldly, and no whit abashed at the solemnity of the Court and the rank of the Judges. 'I was on the fo'ks'le, with the rest of the company drawn up and armed, the muskets being loaded and inspected, waiting for the word to fire, which would have been in a few minutes, as we expected. Then a shot from the enemy struck our bows and the wood went flying; but no one, that I could see, was hurt. And then I saw the Captain strike the flag and cut down the First Lieutenant. "Mates," I whispered presently, "either the ship is sinking, or the Captain has lost his stomach for the fight. If she sinks, we go to Davy's Locker; if he's played the coward, he will swing."' As he said these words, he turned his face to Jack with a look of triumph in his eyes. 'We were all sent down below,' he continued, 'when the Frenchmen came aboard, and there we stayed

with no arms and short rations. Two days afterwards I was on deck, taking my spell of fresh air with the others—about a dozen men in all. We were leaning against the bulwarks, wishing the job was over, and cursing the Captain, who was sitting on the quarter-deck on the trunnions of a carronade, his hands on his knees, staring straight before him as if he saw the rope dangling before his eyes, already noosed for him. Suddenly I saw him spring from his place and catch the French officer, who was walking the deck, by the throat, and shake him like a dog. Then he threw him on the deck (where the Frenchman lay stunned and half-dead) and he tore his sword from him; then he rushed upon one of the sentries and cut him down, and attacked the other: some of the Frenchmen, seeing what was done, cried out in their own lingo, and ran aft, some firing pistols and some drawing cutlasses. Whereupon I called out to my mates and seized a rammer, which was the best thing for a weapon I could come at, and ran after them, and so to the Captain's side, for I plainly saw that his

design was to kill as many of the Frenchmen as he could, and to be killed himself, which I resolved to prevent if I could. And then the other Englishmen joined me, and in a very few minutes we had half of the prize crew killed or wounded, and the other half crying for quarter; but the Captain was so furious that for some time he would give none, throwing himself upon all such as had weapons and would fight. Hard work I had to save him. But I did. When 'twas all over there wasn't a scratch upon him. I saved him, your Honours. With a rammer I saved his life.'

'Your courage,' said the President, 'does you credit. I shall take care that it is duly represented to the Colonel of your regiment; and if your conduct is reported as equal to your gallantry, you will not go without your reward. The Captain, you think, sought for death?'

'No one,' said Aaron, 'who did not want to be killed could have behaved as he did. Before the enemy called for quarter, we had driven them together in the waist, where they

were shouting and threatening to charge us with pikes and bayonets, but we had weapons by this time, and were ready to receive them. But they did not charge, because the Captain leaped into the middle of them with nothing but his sword in his hand, laying about him like a madman. He was sober and in his senses when he cowardly hauled down the flag, but he was now, when he attacked the prize crew, gone stark mad. If he hadn't been mad and not known what he was about, we should never have taken the ship.'

'And you leaped after him?' asked one of the Court.

'I had my rammer, which was almost as good as a quarterstaff; and I'd rather have a quarterstaff than a sword any day, or a pike either, if there's room for play.'

'And this you did out of devotion or loyalty to your Captain?' asked the President, astonished at the man's coolness, and the deliberation with which he gave his evidence.

'Nay, nay,' he replied, grinning again, 'I saved his life because I should have been sorry

to see him die like a brave man. All I wanted was to see him swing, your Honours, for striking his colours.'

These words produced a sensation in the court; and all eyes were turned upon this witness who (though but a simple Marine) carried devotion to his country's honour unto so great a height. But the officers of the 'Calypso' whispered together, and I heard such words passed from one to the other as 'rascal,' 'six dozen,' 'the first chance,' 'not good enough for him,' and so forth, from which I conjectured that Aaron would find a warm welcome if he went to sea again on board this vessel. I think he must have heard the whispers, but he cared nothing for them. He was now enjoying a revenge sweeter far than to have murdered the Captain with his own hand.

Therefore, he turned his ugly face to the prisoner, and grinned with the satisfaction of his ignoble triumph. The Court, however, seemed to take the words for an outburst of honest and patriotic feeling which did credit to this rough and simple fellow.

Captain Easterbrook refused to ask any questions of this witness either. It was now between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, when the President asked the prisoner if he designed to call any witnesses for the defence, and proposed to adjourn the Court until the following day.

'Sir,' said Jack, 'I have no witnesses to call.'

'Then,' said the President, 'you would doubtless wish for time to prepare your defence. It is now late; we will adjourn the Court until to-morrow.'

'Sir,' said Jack, 'I thank you. But, with permission of the Court, I will make my defence without further delay. I will not trouble the Court to adjourn.'

The Court conferred, and presently said that they would hear the prisoner at once, if he chose.

'Gentlemen,' Jack began, 'I have but a few words to say; and as for defence, I have none. I have been at sea since my thirteenth year, and am now four-and-twenty. During

this time I have been present in many actions, and I have never received aught but commendation from my superior officers. I served first under Captain Holmes, of the "Lenox," and next on board the "Countess of Dorset," when I was cast away on the coast of Patagonia, and, after wandering among the Indians, I was prisoner first to the Spaniards, and afterwards to the French. But I broke prison, and was appointed Third Lieutenant to Captain Lockhart, of the "Tartar." I submit that my character for courage was never impugned on board any of these vessels, and Captain Lockhart hath thought fit to bear testimony in his despatches to my conduct in the many engagements fought by his ship. You have also heard how I was enabled, by the help of those of my crew then on deck, to take the ship again.'

He paused here, as if he was unwilling to say what was in his mind.

'I submit to the Court,' said the Deputy Judge-Advocate, 'that these facts, which I think the Court will not dispute, do not constitute any defence.'

'They are no defence,' Jack replied. 'I state them because they form my only consolation in this hour. I have no defence. The charge is true. My officers and crew would have taken, not only the "Malicieuse" but the two other ships as well. Their evidence is true in every particular. I wish to testify that no Commander ever had better officers, a handier vessel, or a heartier crew. I threw all away. I struck the colours. I cowardly and treacherously surrendered my ship without firing a shot. I have but one prayer to make of the Court. It is that this act, which was wholly my own, may not in the least degree prejudice the future of my brave Lieutenants. It was this shameful hand, and none other, which hauled down the flag of the "Calypso."'

When he concluded, there was silence for a space, because the Court and everybody present were taken by surprise, and because the contemplation of this tall and handsome lad (he seemed no more) thus avowing, not proudly, but shamefully, and yet honestly and fully, his own dishonour, overwhelmed us with

sadness. From his officers, standing together, there were whispers, which could be heard all over the court: 'He was mad. A madman is not answerable for his doings. No one but a madman would have done it.' And so forth. And I verily believe, and have been assured, that there was not one among them all who would not gladly have put out to sea again under Captain Easterbrook, in full confidence that he would fight the ship as long as a man was left alive to stand beside him.

As for me, I had looked to see him call some witnesses. He could not, it is true, call Bess Westmoreland; nor could he tell the whole truth, else he would have stood before the Court and said, 'Gentlemen, this is none other than the Hand of GOD which hath struck me for my sins, and because I broke my solemn oath, passed to a woman. *The Hand hath struck me in that way which most deeply and most bitterly I should feel.* For I never feared to die, nor to be wounded, but always and before all things have I loved and prized honour and been jealous for my good name,

and longed to distinguish myself and to rise in the service. Wherefore, now have I been deprived of the thing which most of all I prized, and stand before you all, bereft of honour, a *cowardly* Commander, so that there remains for me nothing but death; and whether I am hanged or shot, I care not, so that I may die soon. For there is no place where I could live whither my shame would not also follow me and be quickly brazened forth to all the folk. Sentence me, therefore, quickly, and let me go.'

This, I say, he felt and knew to be the truth. Yet he would not say it. But he might have called Mr. Brinjes, who would have testified, which is the truth, though it did not perhaps touch the case, that men who have been in places where the sun is hot, especially such as have wandered about without any covering for their heads, are often subject to sudden fits of madness, during which they know not what they do; and that perhaps this was the case with Captain Easterbrook. Nay, I have heard learned physicians, disputing on such points,

argue that sudden fits of madness are often produced by exposure to the hot sun; so that a man who hath once received a sun-stroke, as they call it, may, in such an access, commit murder or any other crime, and not know afterwards what he hath done.

The case being then concluded and the whole evidence completed, with such defence as the defendant had thought fit to set up, order was given to clear the court, which was done, the guard of Marines taking the Captain back to his cabin, and the Judges being left alone.

'He will die,' said Captain Petherick; 'I see in his eyes that there is nothing left for him to desire but death. The day of his execution will be welcome to him. Yet I hope that they will not hang him like a cur, but will shoot him like a brave man.'

'He was certainly mad,' said Mr. Shelvocke. 'I remember once, being then off the Ladrone Islands——'

'Ay,' said Mr. Brinjes, interrupting—I had not seen him in court; yet he was there,

dressed as if for the Club—'Ay. The boy was mad. What? Would a coward have resolved upon so desperate an enterprise as to attack the prize crew single-handed? Death was before him—death if he failed; death if he succeeded; for to succeed was but to throw himself into a court-martial. Whereas, if he had suffered the ship to sail into Brest Harbour, he might have lived in France all his life in safety, and no one to know what had happened. Now, what can they do but sentence him to be hanged or shot? Luke, my lad, if I had Aaron ashore, I would make everyone of his teeth like a lump of red-hot iron; rheumatic pains should grind his joints and twist his nerves; gout should tear and rend his stomach; tic should stick sharp needles into his face. Well—patience! something will happen unto Aaron yet. If, now, the poor boy had been suffered to have his wish, he would have died in the moment of victory, when he had reconquered the ship. As for witchcraft'—here he whispered—'but that I know the poor wretch loves him still, and would rather die than suffer him to come

to any harm, I should believe that Bess was at the bottom of the mischief. I say not that she is a witch; but no one knows what a revengeful woman can do when once she dabbles in the forbidden art.'

Bess was, indeed, at the bottom of the mischief, but in a way which Mr. Brinjes could not understand; for he had not, so far as I could discover, the fear of the Lord before his eyes, and was, indeed, little better than a Pagan.

'There is again,' he said, 'the old black woman. But, then, Jack was to marry her mistress, and therefore she would not harm him. Yet there must be a girl in it, and she must have put Obi upon him by the help of some, though I knew not that there were any other Obeah men in this country, besides myself. If I were younger, I would go to Portsmouth and find that woman, and then, Luke, my lad, she should be made to feel as if it had been better for her never to have been born.'

'Bess, at least, is no witch,' I said, for the fire of his one eye was so bright that I feared

he might have fallen upon her, or, at least, compelled her to tell him the truth.

'This woman, whoever she may be, hath robbed the King's service of the most gallant officer. She hath deprived a lovely woman of her sweetheart; she hath covered us all with shame and confusion. Wherefore, may her flesh fall rotten from her bones! May——'

'Nay, Mr. Brinjes,' I said, 'when you find her you can curse her. Let not your curses loose upon an unknown woman.'

He stopped because at this moment a messenger came forth from the court, and word passed that the armourer was sent for, and my heart sank like lead, and the women began to sob. It was too true. That petty officer presently came on deck and was passed within the court. And we heard the noise of his file. Alas! he was filing Jack's sword, and the end was now certain. To me the filing of the sword was like the cutting of the life-threads at once by the Fates, because—ah! Bess—Bess! how couldst thou survive thy lover?

Then the court was thrown open and the

prisoner was taken back to hear his sentence. We learned afterwards that there was a difference of opinion among the Judges, some inclining to mercy on the ground of the Captain's conduct in recapturing the ship. But in the end the sterner counsels prevailed; and, indeed, the commander of a ship can on no grounds be pardoned for surrendering to the enemy save in extremity. Suppose a man commits a forgery, is it any defence that before and after this act of wickedness he led a good and virtuous life? Suppose a boy picks a pocket, is it any defence that he is sorry, and would fain give back the purse and the money that was in it?

We went back to the court. Alas! If there had been any room for doubt before, there was none now, because the prisoner's sword was reversed, and lay upon the table the point towards the prisoner, which meant Death.

'Guilty,' whispered Mr. Brinjes, not looking at the sword. 'Death is written in their faces.' It was. And yet the brave officers who had

already passed and signed the sentence of death, showed compassion in their faces.

As for me, I cannot even now, after nearly forty years have passed, think of that moment without the tears rising to my eyes. The court was crowded with fine ladies, who had come from London to see the trial. They thought, perhaps, to enjoy the spectacle of a gallant man brought to shame, but they could not without tears and sobbing look upon this poor fellow, tall and manly, brought forth to hear a sentence of death.

The President arose, and read the sentence in his hand, signed by every member of the Court.

'Captain John Easterbrook, the court-martial duly held upon you for the loss of His Majesty's ship the "Calypso," find that you did cowardly surrender your ship. The sentence of the Court is that on a day to be presently appointed, according to the will of His Gracious Majesty the King, you be placed upon the quarter-deck of the "Calypso" and be there shot to death. God save the King!'

Now, before he spoke the last words, he laid down the paper and took Jack's sword in his hands, which he held for a moment as if loth to complete the sentence. Then, with the words, 'God save the King,' he broke the sword—filed in readiness by the armourer—across his knee and threw the broken pieces upon the table. And the women shrieked and the men groaned, and the officers who composed the Court hung their heads as if they dare not face the prisoner. And yet their sentence was most just and righteous.

'Gentlemen,' said Jack, in a clear firm voice, 'I thank the Court for their patient hearing of the case. I looked for no other verdict, and I desire no other. I acknowledge the justice of the sentence. God save the King!'

CHAPTER XLIII.

AFTER THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THUS ended the court-martial; thus was made grievous shipwreck of a gallant youth's ambition, his honour, and his life; yet, as to his honour, 'twas stoutly and steadfastly maintained by all sailors, and especially by the officers and men of the 'Calypso,' that the Captain's surrender (being done in a moment of madness or by power of witchcraft) was fully atoned for by his surprising recapture of the ship. That, too, has always been the opinion of his friends, though, for my own part, as the only one left who knows the whole truth, I cannot but acknowledge that the madness was sent by Heaven, just as much as that madness which the ancients feigned to have been inflicted on

the Greek hero who slew cattle and sheep, thinking they were his enemies. Therefore, no atonement for his deed was necessary, seeing that it was itself a punishment inflicted by the hand of a justly offended Creator.

I know not who told the truth to the Admiral, but perhaps it was Mr. Brinjes, who went daily to see him on account of an attack of gout, brought on partly by his distress of mind and the shame of this untoward event, and partly by the fault of the poor old gentleman himself, who tried to drown care with port wine and punch. This attack obstinately resisted the Apothecary's remedies. Indeed, though for the time he presently recovered, yet he came no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and never held up his head again, going in great heaviness, and, I fear, still taking more drink than is good for any man, until the disease mounted to his stomach, where, Mr. Brinjes being no longer at hand to assuage the pain, it speedily made an end of him.

On the evening of the court-martial the

gentlemen of the Club met as usual, though without their President. The conversation was enlivened, if one may say so, by the extraordinary and tragical incidents of the day. They drank not less, but rather more, in order to sustain their spirits; they took their liquor with whispers, and lowered voice, as is done in a house where one lies dead; and they naturally talked much on subjects akin to what was in their thoughts, as if seeking consolation in recalling examples resembling the case which so much touched their hearts. Thus King Richard the Second is represented by Shakespeare as loving, when in captivity, to talk of the violent deaths of Princes.

'I was present,' said Captain Petherick, 'at the execution of Admiral Byng, two years and a half ago. If family influence could have availed, he would have been spared. Yet he was shot, and went to his death with a smiling countenance.'

'I remember,' said Mr. Shelvocke—but I know not whether this was true—'the death of Captain Kirkby and Captain Wade for cowardly

deserting Admiral Benbow, and that was fifty-seven years ago.'

Another recalled the well-known case of Lieutenant Baker Philips, shot in 1745, for surrendering the 'Anglesea' to the 'Apollon,' after the Captain and the First Lieutenant were both killed. No mercy was shown to him, though it was proved that he had but 200 men and forty guns (and of his crew fifty killed and wounded), against the French crew of 500 men with fifty guns. Yet they shot him at Spithead on board the 'Princess Royal.' As for other courts-martial, Captain Fox, of the 'Kent,' was dismissed his ship for neglect of duty in 1747. In 1744 Admiral Mathers and four Captains were cashiered for neglect of duty. In the same year the Master of the 'Northumberland,' the Captain being mortally wounded, surrendered the ship before the Lieutenant could get on deck. Wherefore, he was sentenced to be confined in the Marshalsea for the remainder of his life. 'And there, gentlemen,' said Mr. Underhill, 'he lies to this day, and but last Monday se'nnight I saw him, and conversed

with him—a poor broken man, who vainly prays for death.'

In short, the talk ran wholly upon trials and executions; the unhappy young man now lying under sentence of death was, so to speak, executed beforehand and in imagination by his friends, who stood (for him) upon the quarter-deck, eyes bandaged, arms folded, before the file of Marines, and hoped (for him) nothing more than a happy shot through heart or head, which should put an instant stop to life. Then the conversation turned upon the various methods of violent deaths, all of which seem to be accompanied by great, and some by prolonged, agonies—such as breaking on the wheel, the punishment of the knout, or burning alive—and there was much discussion as to which method of violent death seemed the most preferable.

It was remarkable that Mr. Brinjes, generally one who talked more than any, for the most part sat apart during this gloomy talk, taking his pipe of tobacco without much share in the conversation, whether from excess of

grief or from the callous disposition of old age, to which most things seem to matter little. But he muttered to himself, as old people use, without heed to those who are about them, and I overheard him.

'Ay . . . ay . . .' he said, 'the boy must be shot, I suppose, and then Bess will not live. . . . She will certainly live no longer when he is gone. So have I lost both. She will go drown herself as soon as the shots are fired. But he is not dead yet—while there is life there is hope—who knows what may happen? 'Twill be three, and perhaps six weeks before the day of execution. Much may be done in six weeks. The lad is not shot yet, nor is Bess drowned. And as for Aaron—but he saved the Captain's life. Wherefore, though he did it with an ill design, I harm him not.' Presently he recovered his spirits, and looked about him, and began to talk in a more cheerful strain, though how he could put on a show of cheerfulness, with the prospect before him of Jack's certain execution and Bess's self-murder, passes understanding. 'The lad is not shot yet!' he

said. Why, what could be done for him? Nothing. A reprieve was past praying for. Yet it must be acknowledged that the popular indignation, which had at first ran high against the Captain who thus cowardly surrendered, quickly subsided and changed into compassion when the circumstances of the recapture became known, so that perhaps a reprieve might not have been so impossible had there been any in high place to ask for it.

As regards the condemned man, whom I saw many times after the sentence, I declare that I have never known any man more cheerful and resigned to his fate than was this most unfortunate Captain during the three weeks which passed between his sentence and the day of his execution. Of hope, he had none; nor did he desire to live.

'If I were reprieved,' he said, 'whither should I go? how live? I am but twenty-four years of age, and I might live for fifty years to come, even into the next century, if the world endure so long, with the accursed remembrance of one day always in my mind, and among

people who would never tire of pointing at the Captain who surrendered his ship without striking a blow—one single blow—the most cowardly surrender in the history of the British Navy. Why, 'twould be every day a thousand times worse than the pains of death. My worst enemy could devise no more cruel punishment than to send me forth free to walk the streets of an English town. Nay, Bess'—for she was with him—'tis idle to talk. I know what thou wouldst say, dear girl. For a mad act—we know, my dear, why that madness was sent, and for what cause permitted—no man should be held responsible. Why, my First Lieutenant was here yesterday, and said as much. But even he does not know, and the world can never know, the whole truth.'

In those last days Bess was with him always. She came at eight in the morning, and she left him at eight in the evening. Everybody knew by this time that she was the Captain's sweetheart; no one found it strange or wonderful, because Bess was the finest woman in Deptford, and the Captain was the

comeliest man; and people only sometimes remembered that he had been reported as promised to the daughter of the Admiral. It astonished me, perhaps because I daily expected and feared it, that no one so much as hinted at the possibility of Bess being engaged in witchcraft, though all were agreed that by foul practices the Captain had been deprived for the moment of his courage. It is no longer the custom to burn witches; yet I am sure that if any woman had been discovered, or even suspected, by the good people of Deptford, to have been concerned in this wickedness, she would have suffered every torture they could have devised. Burning—mere burning—would have seemed too mild a punishment for a woman who could thus by her villainous sorceries turn a brave man into a coward. Again, if things had gone well with this poor girl, if Jack had returned home triumphant and victorious, and had then openly sought his humble sweetheart, there were plenty of women who would have said hard and cruel things concerning her, as is their way with

each other. But now, when her lover lay under sentence of death, they refrained their tongues; nay, they even said good things of her, reckoning it to her credit that, for the sake of the Captain, she would receive the addresses of no other man, and that she sent Aaron Fletcher about his business and consorted with none of her former friends (who were beneath the notice of a Captain's lady), and sought in the society of Mr. Brinjes to acquire the manners and the bearing of a gentlewoman. When she went down to the Stairs in the morning, those women whom she passed on her way stood aside for her in silence, and looked after her with compassion in their eyes, and even with tears; and those, perhaps, the rudest women of the place, fit companions for the rudest sailors, abandoned in morals, sodden with drink, foul of tongue, and ever ready to strike and to swear. So that pity may find a home in the most savage breast.

She sat with Jack, therefore, all day long, in the cabin, which was his condemned cell. For the first day or two she wept continually.

Then she ceased her crying altogether, and sat with dry eyes. She said nothing, but she looked upon her sweetheart always, as if hungering after the sight of his dear face. But from time to time she rose and flung out her arms, as if she could not bear herself. This was natural, when a woman regains her lover only to lose him by a violent death. One evening I walked home with her through the town, and she told me, poor girl! what was in her mind. 'I shall not live after him,' she said; 'of that I am resolved. Why, if it be as he says, that Heaven hath punished him for his inconstancy, was it not through my mouth that the punishment was pronounced? Where he goes, I shall go. When he dies, I shall die. In that same hour when the bullets tear his dear heart, shall I die too; and so my soul shall join his. I know not,' she said, wildly, 'oh! I know not whither we shall be sent in the next world; and I care nothing—no, nothing—so only that we go there together. I am quite sure that he is forgiven all his sins, if ever he committed any,

though I know not that they can be worth considering. And he dies for them. What can a man do more? As for me, I am not afraid, because I have always gone to church every Sunday morning. Oh! I doubt not we shall go to Heaven together, and sit hand-in-hand, and side-by-side; and perhaps we shall forget the past, somehow, and then the old brave look will come back to my boy's eyes. What would Heaven be to him if I were not with him—and what to me if my Jack were not beside me? And oh! Luke, he loves me now more tenderly than ever he loved me before. And I am happy, though I know that we have but a day or two more to live. They tell me that to be shot gives no pain. Else I could not bear it, and must die first.'

I pointed out to her the wickedness of self-destruction; but she would not listen, crying wildly that she cared for no wickedness —not she—so that she could join in death, as well in life, the man she loved. Surely there never was woman who loved man with so violent a passion; and now in these last days,

when it was all too late, there never was girl more truly loved.

'Tis the fondest heart, Luke!' said Jack, the tears in his eyes. 'Why, for thy sake, sweet Bess, I would be almost contented to live, and to forget the past, if we could go somewhere together, where no man knew or could find out my dishonour—if we could go and live on one of the islands in the Southern Seas—— But this is idle talk.'

Then the time drew near when the sentence must be carried out. We expected from day to day to hear that the time was fixed.

About a fortnight after the sentence, a sudden and most surprising change came over Bess. She left off crying altogether; sometimes, even, she laughed; she seemed not to know, or even to care, what she said or did. She would throw herself into Jack's arms, and kiss him passionately; at the next moment she would tear herself free, and stand gasping and panting, and with wild eyes, as if with impatience, so that I feared lest she should lose her reason altogether. I have heard that

persons condemned to the flames by the accursed Inquisition (which they dare to call holy) have been known to go mad with the terror of looking forward to that awful torture. Sure I am that no flames of the stake could be more dreadful to Bess than the thought of the moment when her lover would fall dead, pierced by a dozen bullets. Jack at such times would try to calm her, but she shook him off, crying, 'No—no. Let me be. Oh! I am choking. Oh! Jack—my dear—if you knew what is in my heart! Yes—Jack. I will be quiet. Oh! what a wretch am I that I should add to your trouble at such a time!' Then she threw herself at his feet and caught his hands. 'Jack,' she cried, 'you know that I am your servant and your slave. Oh! if I loved you when all the world spoke well of you, think how much more I love you now you have got no one—oh! no one but your poor fond girl!'

He raised her and kissed her. Nothing now could move him but the sight of her tears and suffering, which (I am not ashamed to

write this down) brought tears to my own eyes.

'Let us pretend,' she said, 'let us talk like children—oh! we were once happy children, and we could pretend and believe what we please. Why . . . all this is only pretence. The cabin is our old summer-house; you are only twelve years of age, and I am a little girl; and we have been playing at court-martial. . . . No,' she shuddered, 'that is a dreadful game. We will play at something else. We are going away—you and I together, Jack—we shall take a ship and sail far away from England to the islands you have seen, and Mr. Brinjes talks about—we will live there—oh! no one will ever find us out. . . . We have long to live. I will work for you, and you will forget all that has happened. Then we shall grow old. . . . Do you think you would love an old woman, Jack, who had lost her beauty, and gone grey and toothless? And then we would lie down and die together. Why—whatever happens, we will die together—we must die together. Jack . . .

Jack. . . . Oh! if we could go away; oh! if we could go away together—to leave it all behind, and to forget it!'

'Patience, dear heart,' he said. 'Patience, Bess; it tears me to see thee suffer.'

I was with them; and—but who could see and listen to him without tears? I am not a stock or stone.

'Patience?' she replied. 'Yes, yes! I will have patience! Jack, do you remember three years ago, the day we were in the summer-house, Luke being present, you solemnly made a great promise?'

'I remember, Bess. God knows I have reason to remember, not only the promise but how I kept it.'

'Make me one more promise, Jack.' She laid her hands upon his arm. 'Make me one more promise now. Luke is here again to witness for us.'

'Why, child, what promise can I make thee now? A dying man can neither make nor break a promise. Shall I promise to love thee in the next world?'

'Nay, promise what I shall tell thee. Say, after me: I, Jack Easterbrook——'

'I, Jack Easterbrook,' he repeated.

'Do swear solemnly, before GOD ALMIGHTY——'

He repeated these words.

'That I will grant to Bess Westmoreland one more request, whatever she may ask me, before I die.'

He said after her, concluding with the words—

'Whatever she may ask me, before I die.'

She fetched a great sigh and kissed him again; and, throwing her arms round his neck, laid her head upon his shoulder.

I could not, for the life of me, understand what she meant; and still I thought that her brain must be wandering with her troubles.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW BESS WENT AWAY.

IT was only three weeks after the sentence that the condemned man received a summons to prepare himself for his execution, which was fixed for Monday, February the Twenty-third. This was a shorter space between sentence and execution than was awarded to the unhappy Admiral Byng, who had eight weeks in which to prepare himself for death. However, Jack complained not, and received the announcement in a becoming spirit, and presently sent a letter to my father, who lost no time in visiting him, and continued daily to visit him until the day of execution.

Now, here I have to write down a strange thing, and one which is hardly to be credited.

From the day of his trial (when, as I have said, the court was crowded with ladies) to the day before the execution, the ship was visited every day by ladies curious to see, and, if possible, to converse with, this young and unfortunate officer. But he would not receive any. Nay, every day letters came to him, full of tender messages and of prayers, some of them entreating him to grant them an interview, some openly declaring their passion for him, some humbly asking for a lock of his hair, or a line in his handwriting, some begging him to observe secrecy in his replies, and some offering their services in high quarters to procure him a pardon or a reprieve. To none of these letters did Jack reply a word, but tore all up and threw the fragments from his cabin window. One day, however (it was after the day had been fixed for carrying out the sentence), there came on board a lady who would take no denial, but wrote down her name upon the back of a playing card and peremptorily ordered that it should be taken to the Captain's cabin. She was so quick, however, that she

followed the messenger, and so forced her way in.

'My handsome Jack!' she cried, but stopped short, because she found another woman with him.

'Madam,' said Jack, rising, 'this is an unexpected honour.'

'I came, Captain,' she said, 'because we are old friends, and because I would fain help thee if I can.'

'No one can, Madam.'

'And because if I cannot, thou mayest still help me.'

'You may command me, Madam.'

'Nay,' she said, looking still at Bess, 'why so formal, Jack? 'Tis terrible to think that in a few days——'

'Madam, my time is short; pray remember that and be brief.'

'Why, Captain,' she laughed, 'twas but a little thing: and perhaps this lady will grant me five minutes alone——'

'It needs not,' said Jack; 'you can speak openly before her.'

'In that case it will be needless. Yet I will try. Captain, thou art condemned to die. 'Tis sad, indeed. Yet 'tis true. Now consider my case. I am deeply in debt. I have quarrelled with my Lord. Marry me, and so take my debts off my back. Nay, Madam'—for Bess sprang to her feet—'be pacified. 'Tis but an empty form that I ask. He shall marry me, and I will retire with the clergyman, and so he will free me at a stroke of all my debts.'

'Madam,' said Jack, before Bess could find time to speak, 'you are unfortunately too late. It is impossible that I could gratify you in this request, because I am married already. This lady is my wife—my most unfortunate wife.'

'Oh, Madam!' said the actress, with a deep curtsey, 'I beg humbly to be forgiven! Believe me, I did not know. Well, Captain'—she heaved a sigh—'of all the men I have ever known thou hast gone nearest to make me think I have a heart. My poor Jack!' She seized his hand and kissed it. 'Oh, Madam'—she turned to Bess—'I thought not of this. I thought I should find him over a bowl of

punch, drinking away his care. Alas! I remember you now. You loved him, and . . . I remember you. . . . Poor child! Who shall comfort thee?'

So she stole away, weeping, and left them alone.

It was, indeed, true. The first service which Jack had asked of my father was to marry him to Bess Westmoreland. It was done secretly in the cabin, with no other witnesses than myself and the First Lieutenant, Mr. Colin Macdonald. So Bess got her heart's desire, and the old witch's prophecy proved true, that in the midst of troubles she should marry the man she loved. But what a marriage! After this my father, as I have said, visited him daily, and every morning asked the prayers of the congregation for one about to die.

Then, as day followed day, and there wanted but two or three more, Bess became still more strange in her manner, showing a restlessness and impatience so that she could no longer remain quiet for five minutes

together, but must needs be pacing backwards and forwards, not crying or lamenting, but with burning face and eyes afire.

The sentence was to be carried out on the Monday morning. On Sunday, with a heart as heavy as lead, I prepared to say farewell.

I went on board about ten o'clock, at the time of morning prayers. Bess was already in the cabin, seated at the window, which was open, though the morning was cold, her face pressed against the bars. Jack was at the table, writing a letter for the Admiral.

'It is nearly finished, dear lad,' he said, looking up with a smile. 'Courage! The worst was over when the trial was done. To die would be nothing—but for leaving Bess. Be kind to her, Luke; be kind to her.'

I looked to see her burst into tears. But no—she listened without a tear or even a sob. 'This night, after I have parted with her, will be long, I fear. Your father hath comforted me greatly in the matter of religion, wherefore I have now a sure and certain hope, if I may humbly say so, though hitherto I have thought

little of these matters. It is a blessed thing for thoughtless sailors that we have a Church to rule our faith, and forms of prayer to save our souls. He will come to-morrow, for the last prayers, before seven. At eight, the boats of the ships in port will surround the ship, the death-signal will be displayed, a gun will be fired, the crew will be drawn up on the deck, and the prisoner will be brought out.' Bess listened without changing her countenance. Was she, then, turned into stone by sorrow, like Niobe?

I cannot write down the words with which he bade me farewell, nor my own. Suffice it that we took leave of each other with, on my side, all that a bleeding heart could find to say, and on his, with a message which I made haste to deliver to the Admiral, his patron and benefactor.

Then I left him alone with Bess.

It was arranged that they should part upon the hour when she must leave the ship and go ashore. He was peremptory that she must not try to see him in the morning, lest the sight

of her might unman him. To stand upon the deck with eyes unbandaged, resolute and firm, was the only duty left for him to perform. Therefore Bess must part with him on Sunday night. She acquiesced, still without a single tear. But when the hour drew near, instead of hanging round his neck and weeping, she took both his hands in hers, and said—

'Jack—dear Jack—my own Jack!—you made me a promise the other day. The time hath come to keep it.'

'A promise, dear heart? Why, what can I do for thee now?'

'You would grant any request that I should make. The time hath now come.'

''Tis granted beforehand, dear girl.'

'My request, Jack, is, that you will live, and not die.'

'Bess?'

'That you will live, and not die. Listen! We have arranged everything for this evening. Mr. Brinjes hath managed all for us. See!' She whispered him very earnestly.

He gazed at her in a sort of stupefaction.

'We shall not stay in the country. A Dutch boat waits us off Barking Creek; the master, a boy, and yourself, will sail her across to Holland. If the wind is fair, we shall make a Dutch port in a day—oh! it is all arranged. We shall not stay in Holland, but take ship to the Dutch East Indies, and thence to the South Seas, where we will live—oh! my Jack—far, far away from the world; and I will work for thee. So we shall forget the past and Deptford, and—and—everything, and there will be a new life for us—oh! a new life, whether it be short or long, with no one to remind us of what hath happened. Oh! my poor tortured dear—it is through me—through me—that all this disgrace hath come upon thee; yes—and it shall be through me that thy life shall be saved!'

'Bess, I cannot! They would say that it was fitting that one who could cowardly strike the flag should also cowardly run away from punishment.'

'What matter what they say? Shall we care what they say, when we are sailing together

among those islands? Will it touch our hearts any more to think of their praise, or blame?'

'Bess, I cannot!—oh! my tender heart, I cannot!'

'Then, Jack, thou SHALT. Thy promise is passed—a solemn promise before GOD. Wilt thou break that promise too, and go before Heaven, thy last act another broken pledge?'

Well, he fought awhile, and he yielded at length; and then she kissed him and went away; but she held her handkerchief to her eyes, so that those who saw her might not suspect.

At the head of the gangway, which, for the convenience of the court-martial, had been made into an accommodation-ladder, furnished with rails and side-ropes, stood Aaron Fletcher on guard.

'Thou art satisfied at last, Aaron?' said Bess.

'Not yet, but I shall be to-morrow,' he replied, whispering, because a sentry must not talk.

She said no more, but passed down the steps and into the boat.

In the afternoon, being in great distress of heart, I went to visit Mr. Brinjes. He was not sleeping, but was busied over a great number of small packages arranged in order upon the table.

'I have seen the last of him,' I said.

'Ay? Is Bess with him?'

'I am troubled about Bess. I think she hath gone distracted. For she weeps no more, and once I saw her laugh. She catches her breath, too, and is impatient.'

'For her distraction I will answer. I know a remedy for it, and that remedy she shall have. As for the catching of her breath, that too shall be cured; as for her impatience, I cannot help it, because it was impossible to complete the job before to-day.'

I asked him what he meant.

'Hath not Bess told you, then? Why, she was to have told you this morning before she broke the thing to Jack. 'Tis a good girl who can keep a secret. It is not true, mind ye, that

no woman can keep a secret. Where their lovers are concerned, they can keep fifty thousand basketsful of secrets, and never spill so much as a single one.'

He began to open the packets, and to count their contents. They contained guineas, about fifty in each packet, and there seemed to be no end of them.

'This,' he said, 'comes of twenty years honest industry. If a man takes in his shop six half-crowns a day and spends only one, in twenty years he shall be master, look you, of no less than four thousand pounds.'

Heavens! could he really be the owner of so great a property? When he had counted the money he dropped it into three or four leathern bags, which he tied to a belt below his waistcoat. 'Now,' said he, 'if we capsize, I shall go straight to Davy's Locker. Give me the skull-stick, my lad—so.' He looked at the horrid thing with admiration. 'I thought at first of giving it to Philadelphy, but now I will not, because she has lied to me about the Great

Secret, which I find she doth not, after all, possess. So much I suspected. She shall not have the Obeah stick. Besides, Heaven knows whither we are going, or what powers we may want; therefore, I shall keep the stick.' He wrapped a cloth about the skull, and tied it up so that no one should know what it was. Then he laid it upon the table.

I observed then that everything was ready as if for departure. The shelves were empty; the fire was out; there were ashes of burnt paper in the grate; the famous charts were rolled up and lying on the table, beside the skull-stick. What did it mean?

'Why,' he said, 'since Bess hath not told you, I will not either. But—I think we can trust thee, Luke—surely we can trust thee, if anyone. Thou lovest Jack, I know, and Bess too, in thy mild and milky way. Why, a lad of spirit would have carried the girl off years ago, Jack, or no Jack. However—that is enough. My lad, we want thy help. There is no other that we can trust. It is life or

death . . . life or death . . . life or death. Say that to thyself, and *forget not to be here at nine of the clock this evening.*'

'What is to be done at nine?'

'It is life or death, I say. Life or death! Now go; I have much to do. It is life or death. Two lives or two deaths. Life or death. Therefore, fail not.'

At nine o'clock I kept my appointment, wondering what would happen.

Bess was there, wrapped in a cloak and hood; in her hand she carried a small parcel. Mr. Brinjes was waiting, muffled and cloaked, his hat tied over his ears, and a roll—containing, I suppose, his charts and his famous skull-stick—under his arm.

'Come, lad,' he said, 'thou shalt know soon what it is we have to do.'

It was a dark and rainy night; the wind blew in gusts; the streets were deserted, save for some drunken fellow who rolled along, bawling as he went. Mr. Brinjes led the way towards the river, and we were presently at the

Stairs, where the boats lay fastened to the rings by their long painters.

'Take the outside boat of all,' said the Apothecary; 'her oars are left in her on purpose. So, haul her to the Stairs. Step in, Bess. She is but a dingey, but she will serve. Luke, you have to row. You may shut your eyes, and keep them shut, if you like, for I shall steer.'

I began to suspect that something serious was to be attempted, but I obeyed without question or remonstrance.

'Twas then high tide, or a little on the ebb, so that at midnight the ebb would be at its strongest. I cast off the painter and shoved off. Then I took my seat and the oars, and rowed while Mr. Brinjes steered.

The river was rough and dark, save for the lights displayed by the ships. The 'Calypso' was moored very nearly off the mouth of the dock, but in mid-stream. Mr. Brinjes suffered me to row almost across the river, as if he were making for one of the Stairs on the other side. Then he put her head up stream, and steered so that the boat approached

the 'Calypso,' whose lights he knew, not as if we were boarding her, but as if we were making our way across her bows to the Dog-and-Duck Stairs of Redriff. The precaution was not necessary, perhaps, seeing how dark it was; but the eyes of sailors are sharper than those of landsmen; and the watch must not allow a boat to approach a ship without a challenge. We crossed the bows, therefore, of the 'Calypso,' I still rowing, and the boat apparently heading to the opposite shore.

But while we were still under the shadow, so to speak, of the great ship's bows, my coxswain whispered, 'Easy rowing—-ship oars.'

I could not guess what he intended. 'Twas this.

The 'Calypso' lay pretty high out of water. The tide was running strong. Mr. Brinjes turned the boat's head and ran her straight under the side of the ship. He then, being as quick and skilful in the handling of a boat as any man sixty years younger, stepped into the bows, and with hand and boat-hook worked the boat along the side of the vessel to the

stern, where he hooked on, and whispered that we must now wait.

'We have more than two hours still to wait. I think the watch will have no suspicion, and 'tis better to wait here an hour or two than to hurry at the end, and so perhaps be seen and the whole plot spoiled. Here we lie snug.'

We might be lying snug, but we lay more than commonly cold, and the wind and rain beat into one's face. Bess sat, however, with her hood thrown back, careless of cold or rain; and Mr. Brinjes lay muffled up in the bows. But in his hand he held the boat-hook.

The ship's bells and the town clocks and the Greenwich clocks made such a clashing in our ears every quarter of an hour, as kept us aware of the time—never before did I understand how slowly he crawleth. Why, there seemed to me an hour between each quarter, and a whole night between each hour.

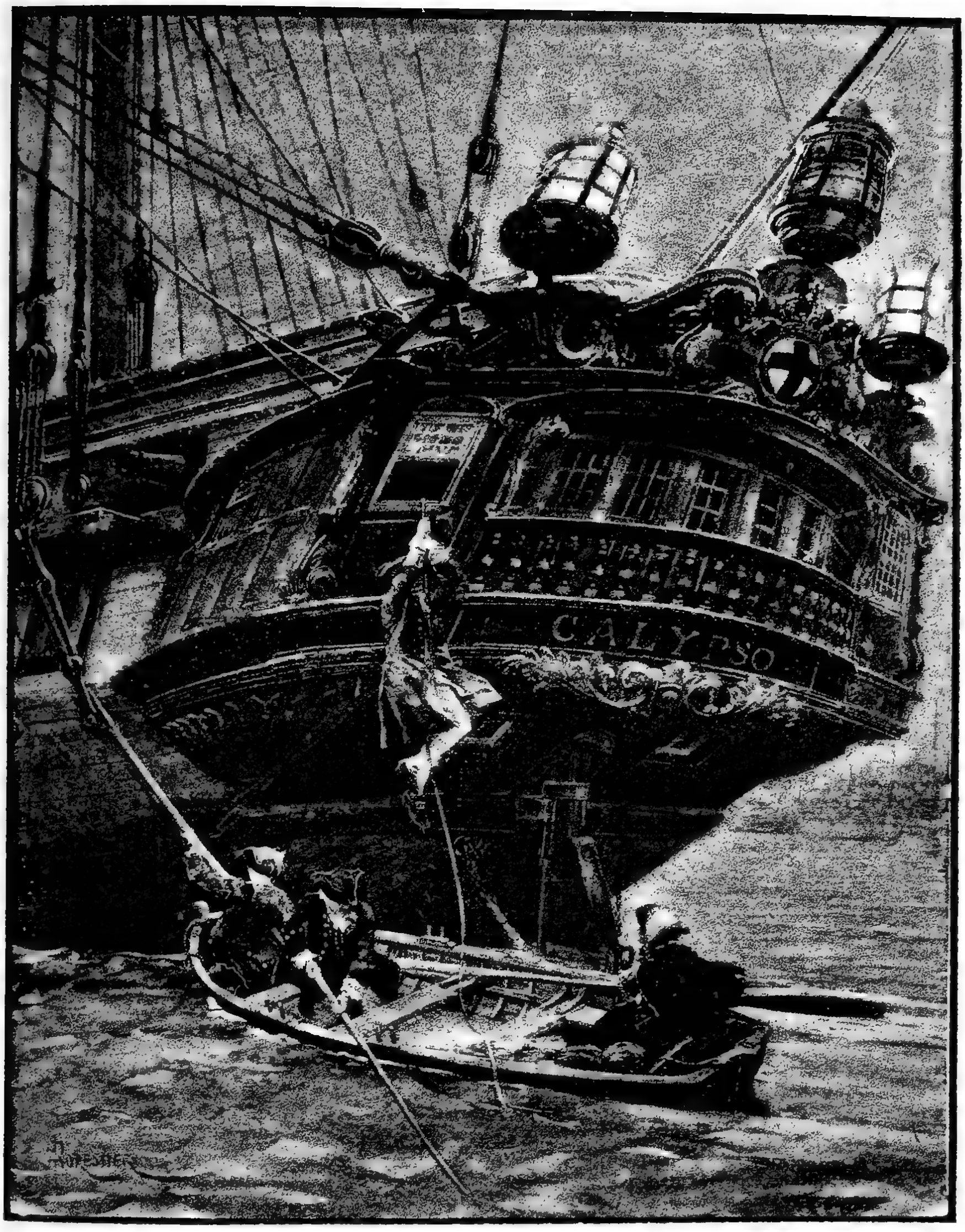
When the clocks began to strike midnight Bess looked up and the old man threw off his

cloak. 'Oars out,' he whispered. 'Gently. Don't splash. Here he is!'

We were immediately, though I knew it not, below the windows of Jack's cabin, which was the Captain's state-room. Below his window were those of the First and Second Lieutenants, and Mr. Brinjes had chosen the time of midnight, because then the watches would be changing, and these officers would be on deck or else fast asleep. It was as he expected. The end of a rope fell into the water close beside the boat, and then, hand under hand, our prisoner came swiftly down. In a moment he was sitting in the stern. Then Mr. Brinjes let go, and the tide, hurrying down the river as fast as a mill race, carried us noiselessly and swiftly away.

No one spoke; but Mr. Brinjes again took the ropes, and I began to row. We were very soon, keeping in mid stream, past Greenwich, and past Woolwich, I rowing as hard as I could, and the ebb-tide strong, so that we made very good way indeed.

Presently we came alongside a small vessel



'Hand under hand, our prisoner came swiftly down.'

lying moored off Barking Creek, and Mr. Brinjes steered the boat alongside, and caught a rope.

'Now, Bess,' he said, 'quick; climb up.'

She caught hold of the cleats, and ran up the rude gangway as nimbly as any sailor. Mr. Brinjes followed.

Then Jack seized my hand. 'Farewell, dear lad,' he said, 'I thought not to see thee again. Farewell.'

So he followed, and left me alone in the boat.

'Sheer off, Luke,' said Mr. Brinjes looking over the side; 'sheer off, and take her back to the Stairs. Tell no one what hath been done. Farewell. We sail for the Southern Seas.'

Then I saw that they were hoisting sail. She was a Dutch galliot carrying a main and mizen-mast, with a large gaff mainsail. This, with a flying topsail, and the usual fore-and-aft canvas, would with this wind and tide take her down to the North Foreland very quickly, after which, if the wind still continued fair, she might

expect to make the port of Rotterdam in sixteen, or perhaps twenty hours more.

When I had painfully pulled the boat up stream and gotten her back in her place at the Stairs, and was at last in bed, I began to understand fully what had been done—namely, that a great crime had been committed in the rescue of a prisoner sentenced to death, and that, with my two accomplices, I was liable to be tried and——I fell asleep before I could remember what the punishment would be.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE next morning my father was astir by six; and I, hearing him, and remembering suddenly what had happened, could sleep no more, but rose quickly, and dressed. He was already in wig and cassock; his clerk in readiness with prayer-book, bible, and the materials wherewith to administer the Supper of the Lord.

'My son,' he said, 'the ministration to a dying man is the most awful part of a clergyman's holy duties; and yet it is that which should most fill him with gratitude and joy. Terrible it is at all times to watch the soul take its flight into the unknown regions: most terrible of all when death comes violently upon one still young and strong and in the prime of his day.'

More he would have said; but here we were interrupted by the arrival of the Admiral himself, borne in an arm-chair by his four negroes, his feet swathed in flannel, and himself wrapped in warm cloaks, for 'twas dangerous for him to leave the warmth of his own room.

'Doctor,' he said, when the men had set him down, 'you are now about to comfort our boy in his last moments.' Here he paused awhile, the tears running down his cheeks 'His last moments, poor lad,' he repeated. 'I could not lie still and think that he should die without a word from me. Therefore, though I would not turn his thoughts away from religion, I cannot let him die with never a word from his father's oldest friend. 'Twere inhuman. Tell him, therefore, from me, that I now plainly perceive that he was mad. Other men besides himself have gone mad at sea. I know one who went mad and jumped overboard, in a storm; and another who went mad and ran amuck on the quarter-deck with a cutlass, wounding many before he was disarmed; and another——but no matter. He was mad.

Tell him that for the act of God, there is nothing but resignation. The thing might have happened to any. We are fools to feel any shame in it. As for all that went before and that came after his madness, tell him we are proud of him therefore, and we shall remain proud of him. But for his own sake,we are grieved that he was not killed in the recapture of the vessel. Bid him, therefore, meet his death with a calm heart—a brave heart, I know, will not fail him. Take him my last blessing, and my undiminished love. There is no question, tell him, of forgiveness. The act of God must not be questioned. But the pity of it—oh! Doctor—the pity of it!' and with that he fell to weeping like a child.

And then the two old men wept together, but I, who knew what had happened and that there would be no execution that day, had no tears.

They carried back the Admiral and put him to bed again, and I accompanied my father as far as the Stairs. As I returned slowly, my heart full of strange emotions, the bell of St. Paul's began to toll the passing knell. No need

to ask for whom that bell was tolling. At the sound the women came to the doors and began to cry, and to talk together, full of pity, the kind-hearted creatures, shrews as they were, and slatterns, and drabs. The old men at the Trinity Hospital were gathered together in their quadrangle, talking of the boy they had known and loved. The Barber and his four 'prentices were busy shaving, the shop full, everybody talking at the same time; and in his doorway stood Mr. Westmoreland, looking up and down the street with troubled face.

'Where is she?' he asked. 'Mr. Luke, where is my Bess?'

'Indeed, Mr. Westmoreland,' I replied, 'where should she be if not in her own bed?'

'She hath not been home all night. I have heard talk of her and Captain Easterbrook. But that poor young man is to be shot this morning. Where can she be? They tell me that she spends the days in his cabin. Sir, you know them both: I' faith he hath played her false. Who would have daughters? Yet if she is all day long with him, needs must that

she come ashore in the evening, Mr. Luke. Who, sir, I ask you, would have daughters to plague his old age? I thought she might have stayed at the Apothecary's, and I have knocked, but can make no one hear. Think you that Mr. Brinjes is dead? He is already of a great old age. This is a terrible morning. That poor young gentleman must die; he must be cut off in the pride of his life and strength, the comeliest man I have ever seen, and he hath stolen my daughter's heart away. Why, what shall I do with her when he is dead? How shall I endure her despair and her grief? how find consolation to assuage her wrath when he is gone?'

I knew very well how that question would be answered. But I could not tell him what had happened.

'It is his passing bell,' the Penman continued. 'Lord, have mercy upon his soul! He is young, and hath doubtless committed some of the sins of youth; the Lord forgive him! He hath often used profane language, and that in my hearing. The Lord forgive him! As

for his striking his colours, that will not, I am sure, be laid to his charge. Besides, he hath atoned for this sin by his death. The Lord forgive him for an honest and brave lad! 'Twas once a joy to see him handle his logarithms. Will they bury him in St. Paul's churchyard? Poor lad! Poor lad! What shall I say to Bess to comfort her when she comes home?'

Thus he went on prattling; but I left him.

At the door of Mr. Brinjes' shop stood his assistant, knocking.

'Sir,' he said, 'I am afraid that something hath happened to my master, for I have knocked and cannot make him hear.'

I advised him to wait half an hour or so, and then to knock again.

It was impossible to rest. I went again to the Stairs, where the watermen should be hanging about. There was not one man there, nor a single boat. Round the 'Calypso' there was a great fleet of ships' boats, and Thames boats, all waiting for the execution. People had

come down from London—even, they said, as far as from Chelsea—to see the sight. Why, they could see nothing from the river. True, they might have the satisfaction of hearing the roll of the muskets. There never was so great a concourse on the river, even on the day of Horn Fair.

At eight o'clock—the time of execution—everybody listened to hear the rattling of the guns. But there was silence. Presently, I know not how it began, there sprang up a rumour—only a rumour at first—that the sentence would not be carried out that morning; then it became certain that there would be no execution at all; and it was spread abroad that at the last moment, the Captain had been respited. About eleven o'clock the boats dispersed and returned again, the people disappointed. It was not until later that it was known—because at first no one, not even my father and his clerk, were allowed to leave the ship—that Captain Easterbrook could not be shot because he could not be found.

I found the Apothecary's shop open—they

had broken in at the back—and the assistant was mixing medicines and prescribing.

'Sir,' he said, 'my master is gone. He hath not slept in his bed. He hath taken his money and his charts, but nothing else.'

'His money and his charts? How do you know that he has taken his money?'

'I know where he kept it and I looked to see if it was gone. Because, I said, if my master's money is still there, he will return. But it is gone; therefore I know that he has gone.'

'Whither hath he gone, sirrah?'

'I know not, sir; any more'—here he looked mighty cunning—'than I know whither Captain Easterbrook hath gone, or Bess Westmoreland, or what you were doing with my master and Bess on the Stairs last night at nine o'clock.'

Now, I have never learned if this man knew more than the fact that we were upon the Stairs at that time. Certainly, he could not know the whole truth.

'I think,' I said, 'that if I were you, I

would continue to carry on the business without asking any questions, until your master returns.'

'I will, sir,' he replied; and he did. His master did not return, and this fortunate young man succeeded to a good stock and a flourishing trade, and would doubtless have become rich but for the accident of being killed by a drunken sailor.

When it became known that Mr. Brinjes, Bess, and the Captain had all disappeared on the same evening, it was impossible not to connect these three events; and all the world believed (what was perfectly true) that the girl had run away with the Captain, and that Mr. Brinjes had gone, too, out of pure affection for them.

The Admiral presently recovered from his attack, but he went no more to the Sir John Falstaff, and entirely lost his former spirits; and, as I have already said, within a year or two was carried off by an attack of gout in the stomach. Shortly afterwards I was so happy as to win the affections of Castilla. She informed

me that, although she was carried away by natural pride in so gallant a wooer as Jack, she had never felt for him such an assurance in his constancy as is necessary to secure happiness, and that when she heard of his infatuated passion for so common a creature as Bess Westmoreland, she was thankful for her release, though she deplored the sad cause of it. 'We no longer,' she often says, 'burn women for witchcraft, but such a girl as Bess, who can so bewitch a gallant man as to make him invoke the curse of Heaven upon himself if he prove inconstant, and thereby bring him to shame and disgrace, ought to be punished in some condign and exemplary manner.' It is not my practice to argue with my wife, especially on points where we are not likely to agree; and as Bess will probably never return, and cannot, therefore, be punished, Castilla may say anything she please about her. For my own part, my heart has always been with that poor girl, who did not seek for or expect the honour of Jack's affections, and whose witchery was in her beauty and her black eyes.

On the conclusion of peace in 1762, Aaron Fletcher, with many other Marines, was disbanded, but he was afraid to venture back into Deptford, where his creditors would have arrested him. I know not for a certainty what he did to bring the arm of the law upon him; but I know what became of him. For one day, being at Limehouse, I saw going along the road on the way to the Stairs, where were waiting several ships' boats, a dismal company of convicts, for embarkation to the plantations of Jamaica, or Barbadoes, or some other West Indian Island. There were at least a hundred of them, walking two and two, handcuffed in pairs. Some of these were in rags, some shaking with prison fever, some dejected, some angry and mutinous, some were singing —there are wretches so hardened that they will sing ribald songs on their way even to the gallows. One there was of appearance and bearing superior to the rest, by whose side there walked a young woman, his wife or mistress, bearing a baby, and crying bitterly; another, beside whom walked a grave and

sober citizen, the brother or cousin of the convict, the tears in his eyes. But mostly there were no friends or relations to mourn over this outcast crew. And at the head marched a band of fifes and drums, playing 'Through the woods, laddie'; and a crowd of boys followed, whooping and hallooing. When the procession was nearly past, I was surprised to see among the men, handcuffed together, no other than Aaron Fletcher and Mr. Jonathan Rayment, the crimp. The latter was pale, and his fat cheeks shook, and all his limbs trembled with fever. 'Twould have been merciful to let him lie till death should carry him off. But Aaron walked upright, looking about him with eyes full of mutiny and murder. I know not if he saw me; but the procession filed past, and the band went on playing at the head of the Stairs while the wretches embarked on board the boats. As for the crimes which Aaron and his companion had committed, I do not know what they were, but I suspect kidnapping formed part. I have never learnt what became of Mr. Rayment; but concerning

Aaron there afterwards came intelligence that he could not brook the overseer's lash and the hot sun, and fled, with intent to join the wild Maroons, but was followed by bloodhounds, and pursued, and, being brought back to his master, was naturally flogged. He then sickened of a calenture and died. He was a bad man; but he was punished for his sins. Indeed, it is most true that the way of transgressors is hard.

Lastly, to complete this narrative, I must tell you of a message which came to me five or six years after the court-martial. It was brought even from the Southern Seas. Heard one ever of a message or letter from that remote and unknown part?

There was a certain wild fellow, Deptford born, Will Acorn by name. This young man, for sins of his which need not delay us, left his native town, where he had been brought up as a shipwright, and went to sea. Nor did he come back again for several years, when he reappeared, the old business being now blown over and forgotten. And presently he

came to my house, I then living in St. Martin Street for convenience of business, and told me a strange story.

With some other privateers of Jamaica, where these fellows are mostly found, he must needs try his fortune in the South Seas. Accordingly, they got possession of a brig, or barcolongo, as they call this kind of ship in the West Indies, and they armed her with certain carronades and peteraroes, and to the number of eighty or ninety stout men, all fully armed, put out to sea. In short, they proposed to go a-pirating among the Spanish settlements, as many have done before them.

It matters not here what was the success of their voyage—Will Acorn, at least, returned home in a very ragged and penniless condition. This, however, was the man's story.

'We sighted one morning at daybreak, being then not far from Masa Fuera, a large brigantine flying Spanish colours. She was much too big for us to tackle, therefore we hoisted the Spanish flag, too, and bore away, hoping that she would let us alone, and go on

her own course. But that would not suit her, neither, and she fired a shot across our bows, as a signal to back sail. This we did, expecting nothing short of hanging, for she carried thirty guns at least, and we could see that she was well manned, and looked as if she was handled by a French Captain, under whom even a Creolian Spanish crew will fight. Well, she spoke us when she was near enough, and ordered, in Spanish, that the Captain was to come aboard. Now, as I was the only man who had any Spanish, our Captain bade me come with him. So I went; and we thought we were going to instant death, the Spaniards being born devils when they get an English crew in their power.

'Sir,' this honest fellow continued, 'think of our astonishment when, on climbing the vessel's side, they ran up the pirate's flag; to be sure, we were little else than pirates ourselves; but we knew not what countrymen these were. As for the crew, they were nearly all black negroes, and a devilish fighting lot they looked, being armed with pistols and cutlasses,

while the decks were cleared for action, and every man to quarters, and the whole as neat and clean as aboard a British man-o'-war. And on the quarter-deck there stood, glass in hand, none other than Captain Easterbrook himself, the same as was tried by court-martial, sentenced, and escaped. He was dressed very fine, in crimson silk, with a gold chain, and pistols in his belt. I knew him directly; but his face is changed, for now it is the face of one who gives no quarter. A fiercer face I never saw anywhere.

'But the strangest thing was that I saw lying in the sun, propped up by pillows and cushions, the old Deptford Apothecary, Mr. Brinjes. He looked no older, and no younger; his one eye twinkling and winking, and his face covered with wrinkles.

'"Will Acorn, ahoy!" he sings out. "Will Acorn, by the Lord!"

'When he said this there came out from the Captain's cabin a most splendid lady, dressed in all the satins and silks you can think of, with gold chains round her neck, and jewels spark-

ling in her hair. Behind her came two black women, holding a silken sunshade over her head. Why, Sir, 'twas none other than Bess Westmoreland, the Penman's daughter, and more beautiful than ever, though her cheek was pale, and her eyes were somewhat anxious.

'"Will Acorn?" she cried. "Is that Will Acorn, of Deptford Town?"

'So with that the Captain called us from the poop. "Hark ye," he said, "you seem to be Englishmen. What ship is yours?"

'So we told him who we were, and why we were cruising in those seas. He listened—'tis a terrible fighting face—and heard us out, and then bade us drink and go our way.

'"I war not with Englishmen," he said; "but for French and Spaniard I know no quarter."

'He said no more, but his lady—Bess Westmoreland that was—stepped out to us, and asked me many questions about Deptford folk. And then she put into my hands this parcel, which I faithfully promised to deliver into your hands, Sir, should I ever return home again.

And I was to tell you that they had found Mr. Brinjes' island, and she was as happy as she could expect to be. And then Mr. Brinjes lifted his head, and said, in a piping voice, "And tell him," he said, with his one eye like a burning coal, "tell Luke Anguish, man, that we committed the town of Guayaquil to the flames. 'Twould have done his heart good to see the town on fire, and the Spaniards roasting like so many heretics at the stake!"'

This was the message. The parcel contained a gold chain and cross, set with precious stones, which I gave to Castilla, hoping thereby to make her think less hardly of poor Bess. But in vain; though she wears the chain, which, she says—though this is not the case—was sent to her by Captain Easterbrook, in token of his repentance, and of his unhappiness with the woman who bewitched him, and of his continual sorrow for the loss of her own hand.

It is now more than thirty years ago, and since then we have heard nothing more. I conjecture that either they have long since

been swallowed up in a hurricane, Bess dying, as she wished, at the same moment as Jack, or that they are still living somewhere in those warm and sunny islands of which the Apothecary was never wearied of discoursing.

THE END

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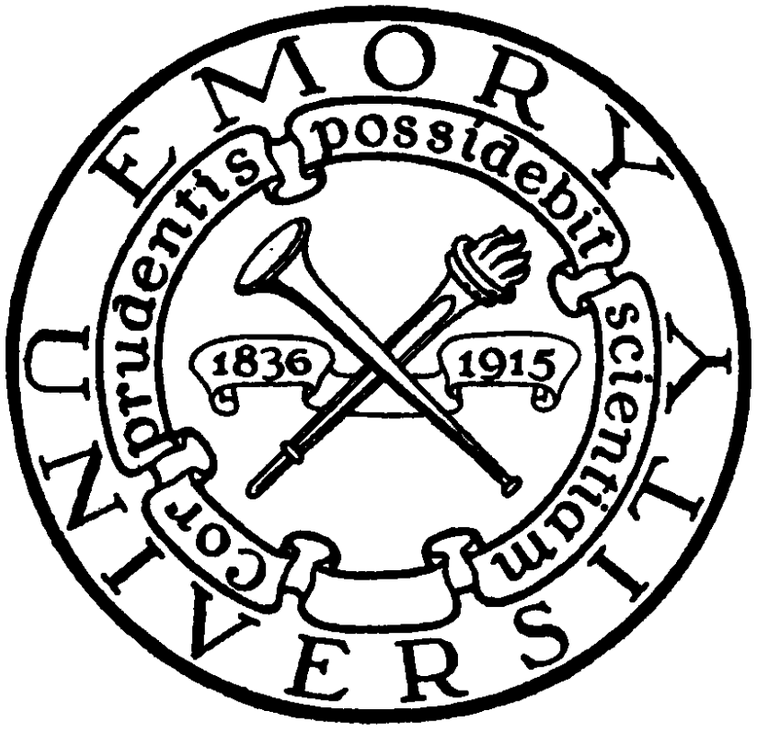
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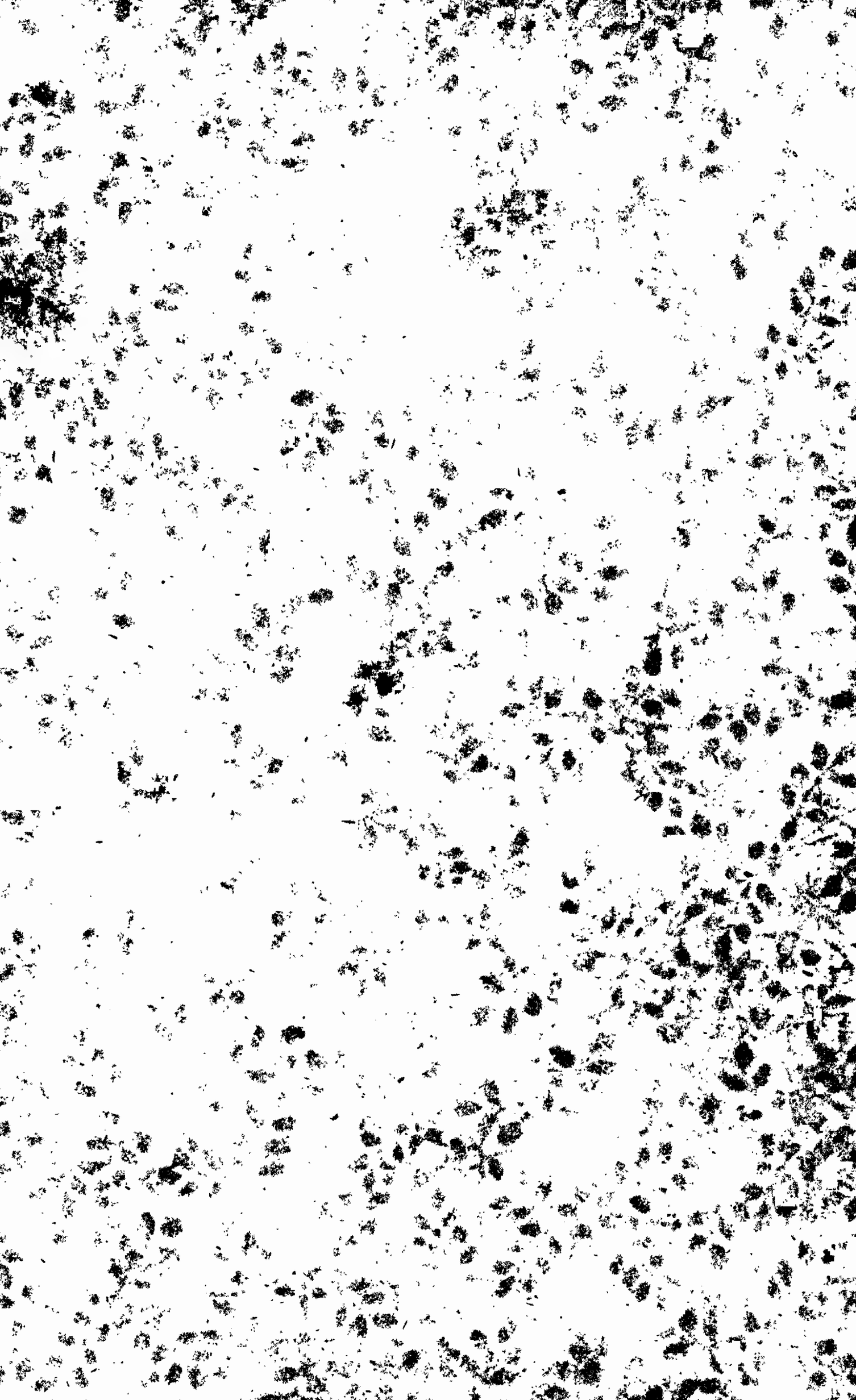


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